

Disclosed Regrets

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Relationships:	Lán Zhàn Lán Wàngjī/Wèi Yīng Wèi Wúxiàn, Jiāng Yànlí/Jīn Zǐxuān
Characters:	Lan Zhan Lan Wangji, Wei Ying Wei Wuxian, Jiang Cheng Jiang Wanyin, Jiang Yanli, Jin Zixuan, Wen Ruohan, Meng Yao Jin Guangyao, Lan Huan Lan Xichen, Lan Qiren, Jiang Fengmian, Lan Yuan Lan Sizhui, Lan Jingyi, Ouyang Zizhen, Jin Ling Jin Rulan, Wen Qing (Modao Zushi), Wen Ning Wen Qionglin, Jin Guangshan, Jin Zixun, Nie Huaisang, Nie Mingjue, Sect Leader Yao (Modao Zushi), Song Lan Song Zichen, Gūsū Lán Disciple(s) (Módào Zǔshī), Granny Wen (Modao Zushi), Wen Chao (Modao Zushi), Xiao Xingchen, Xue Yang Xue Chengmei, A-Qing (Modao Zushi), Luo "Mian Mian" Qingyang, Luo "Mian Mian" Qingyang's Daughter, Luo "Mian Mian" Qingyang's Husband, Wen Xu (Modao Zushi), Madam Jin (Modao Zushi), Original Female Character(s), Original Male Character(s), Li Dàiyù, Chǔ Róng, Yú Guāng Yú Huīzhōng
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32/?

Disclosed Regrets

by [HuaisangsIntellect](#)

Summary

One typical, ordinary morning, the entirety of the cultivation world awaken in a strange room resembling that of the Burial Mounds. Wei Wuxian, as usual, is the prime suspect for their mysterious appearance. Although...

"Shijie...?"

"A-Xian!" "Wei Ying!" "Wei Wuxian!"

What entity transported them into that strange room, and for what purpose? And someone PLEASE explain to Jiang Wanyin why Wen Ruohan is having the time of his life right now..!!

And most importantly, why are both Wei Wuxian's past AND thoughts being broadcasted to everyone? And why, for the last time, are all of the supposedly-dead people (including the bad guys) alive again?

(Or: The characters of Mo Dao Zu Shi watch Mo Dao Zu Shi)

[Russian Translation](#) [Spanish Translation](#)

Reunion

Chapter Notes

I was editing and then 41 words suddenly became 708...672 became 1663

Anyways! Welcome to my story! I'm slowly making my way through these chapters, so please bear with me for the moment :)

Revised 10/07/22

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Wei Wuxian's unrestrained mischievousness was nothing new to the calm and tranquil home called Cloud Recess. After marrying the second young master of the Lan Sect, his abrasiveness only grew, much to their dismay, and his attitude went from being annoying to being an utter abomination (to Lan Qiren's eyes, anyway).

Three-hundred and fifty-two rules had been added to the wall of discipline, Lan Jingyi had counted, ever since Wei Wuxian came back to Cloud Recess. On second thought, three more had been added this very morning!

Lan Jingyi didn't particularly *dislike* his senior's new, joyous company, and actually revelled in it. Senior Wei, to him, was like a father figure, just how Hanguang-Jun was. You see, Lan Jingyi had joined the Lan sect as a child, just after his parents had passed away. It was then that he met the young, amnesiac Lan Yuan, and the punished, sorrowful Hanguang-Jun. They, (not that he would ever tell them) had become his *new* family, and with Senior Wei added to the picture, it felt like it was *finally* complete.

Except, despite the many praises and fond headpats he receives; despite the joking comments of him being their son; despite the *love* and care he has been given, Lan Jingyi doesn't feel *part* of their family, no matter how much they continuously tell him that he is.

Today was just another, ordinary, auspicious day. He woke up late, after falling back asleep who-knows-how-many-times, went to feed Hanguang-Jun's rabbits, woke up Wei-Qianbei with the day's breakfast, chatted a bit with his junior disciples, and *finally* began to practise sword drills. His skill with a sword has increased *drastically*, hence why he's now referred to as "Jingyi-ge", "Lan-xiong", and sometimes even a few passionate "Lan-Qianbei"s! Although Sizhui was better than him in terms of cultivation, it was only a matter of time before Jingyi would surpass him!

"Here, raise your right arm a little bit, and... there! You've got it! Now try again like that!"

As soon as they completed the move correctly, the junior's eyes lit up and then they turned to Lan Jingyi with a happy "Thank you, Lan-Qianbei!"

Lan Jingyi coolly nodded, briefly flicking his nose with a proud finger, just like Senior Wei had taught him to do when he was being cool. "It was your own hard work that led you to victory. Well done, shidi." *Oh, how mature he had become!!*

It was then that he heard a familiar call of "Jingyi!" and his walls of maturity crumbled as quick as they were erected. His face pulled into a wide smile as he saw *his Wei-Qianbei running towards him!!* "Wei-Qianbei! It's you!"

If Lan Jingyi childishly clung to Wei Wuxian's torso, he would vehemently deny it to any shidi who lived to tell the tale.

"So clingy," Wei Wuxian complained, although a smile crept up his face as he spoke. "Right, Jingyi, have you seen Lan Zhan? I've been looking all over for him this morning but no one has apparently seen him."

Lan Jingyi removed himself from the embrace and picked up his sword from where he'd thrown it onto the floor (oops) as he replied, "Hm... Yesterday he mentioned there being a discussion conference in Qinghe... perhaps he's gone there?"

"Oh, wait..." Wei Wuxian's smile suddenly faded. "He *did* mention that yesterday to me as well... I must have forgotten."

"Senior Wei, did you not question the tray of breakfast by your bedside in the Jingshi?"

Wei Wuxian slowly glanced to his left. "Oh, that tree is suddenly very intriguing.... Have you ever wondered how resentful spirits possess *trees*, Jingyi?"

Lan Jingyi rolled his eyes. "Senior Wei, Hanguang-Jun was the one who prepared your breakfast this morning since he was going to be away for the entire day."

"Oh," Wei Wuxian commented. "No wonder it was more delicious than normal..."

"You know it's me and Sizhui who prepare your usual meals, right?"

"..." Wei Wuxian said slowly. "Oh, would you look at that? My lips hurt, I think today's breakfast was a bit spicier than usual..."

"But senior, you yourself said that the more spice, the more delicious it is...."

"....."

Lan Jingyi chuckled, "Anyways, Senior-Wei, why *were* you looking for Hanguang-Jun in the first place?"

"Well, actually, this morning I was busy tinkering with talismans as usual, when I *accidentally* altered a cleaning charm into something that prevents your clothes from getting dirty as long as the talisman is attached to it!"

Lan Jingyi gasped in spite of himself, "Wei-Qianbei, that is genius! Can you teach me how to make them? I could show it to the other disciples too!"

Wei Wuxian grinned, "If you think *that's* amazing, then just wait until you see this." He pulled out a talisman from inside of his sleeve and waved it tauntingly in front of Lan Jingyi's face. "Guess what it does. I'll give you three attempts."

Jingyi's eyes widened, "No way.. Does it enhance your beauty, making you look young?! Wei-Qianbei, is that why you look like you haven't aged for ten years?"

"You're such a smooth flatterer; in the future, you'll have no trouble finding a partner," Wei Wuxian grinned, "But how I wish that were true, it's unfortunately not... Maybe I *should* work on something like that.." He began playing with both of his cheeks as he continued, "I was worried that this face was losing its shine. Lan Zhan gets more handsome each day, I am so envious.."

Lan Jingyi nodded in understanding before he considered, "Then... does it give you a free jar of Emperor's smile?!"

Wei Wuxian raised an eyebrow, "If I really made that, then do you really think I'd be here chit-chattering right now?"

"Oh..." Lan Jingyi commented. "Then... does it act as a sword cleaner? I could really use something like that; cleaning my sword takes absolutely *ages*... especially after a night hunt."

Wei Wuxian hummed in thought, "That's a great idea, Jingyi! It isn't correct, but I could also work on something similar to that. Bichen would definitely benefit from it too..."

"Bichen? Not Suibian?"

"Suibian, ah..." Wei Wuxian said slowly. "Suibian as well, of course. I just tend to favour Bichen at times, you see?"

The pair's conversation came to a halt when a familiar voice exclaimed from the distance, "Senior Wei, Jingyi!"

Wei Wuxian instantly brightened at the voice, "A-Yuan!!!"

Lan Sizhui was pulled into his father's embrace, who immediately began to pepper his face with kisses. "A-Yuan, where'd you go? I was looking for you, but both you and Lan Zhan had disappeared."

Lan Yuan smiled softly, "Well, A-Die invited me to go to Qinghe's conference with him for experience... Sorry we never told you."

From behind, Lan Wangji nodded with a slight smile. "Mn."

Wei Wuxian's smile got impossibly wider. His entire body screamed, *Lan Zhan!!*

"Lan Zhan, Lan Zhan, you're back!! This husband missed you!" Wei Wuxian shamelessly threw himself into his husband's arms, who accepted him immediately. "Lan Zhan, look at this! I made a new talisman! You'd definitely benefit from it!! You Lans always wear those immaculate white robes, and having to cast a cleaning charm all day must be so tiring! So,

this talisman prevents your robes from getting dirty in the first place!! Lan Zhan, did I do well?"

Lan Wangji smiled, "Mn. Very good."

"...!"

"Wei Ying is very good."

"Lan Zhan, don't smile like that, my heart... My heart can't handle it! Your poor husband will end up *fainting*!"

"Will catch Wei Ying."

"B- But then I'll end up sick! And in bed for days! What good will catching me do?"

"Will care for Wei Ying."

"....And- And then I will... I will..." Wei Wuxian trailed off, a flush forming on his cheeks. "...I will, you know..."

Wei Wuxian embarrassedly covered his face with both hands. When they were teenagers, it was always *him* flirting with Lan Zhan, *him* teasing Lan Zhan, and *him* making Lan Zhan blush like a maiden!! Now, somehow, Lan Zhan has grown accustomed to teasing him and is even *more* shameless! At this rate, he will have no face left!

A Lan disciple whispered, "So much dog food..."

Lan Jingyi turned to Lan Sizhui with a blank face, "Sizhui, should we go?"

"....Yes.." Lan Sizhui coughed into a hand. "A-Die, Baba.. me and Jingyi are going to go meet Jin Ling at the gate. Sect Leader Jiang and he are due to come, after all..."

Lan Jingyi added, "Senior Wei, try not to hand out too much dog food. All of my shidi are right behind you, if you didn't know already."

Wei Wuxian startled at the crowd of awkward Lans standing behind him, but nonetheless sternly remarked, "Don't get into trouble. I don't wanna be clearing up after you."

Lan Jingyi scoffed, "I'm surprised that it's you saying that. Now you know how Hanguang-Jun feels!" He stuck out a mischievous tongue before pulling Lan Sizhui along and running away.

Watching the two disappear into the distance, Wei Ying crossed his arms. "That boy is getting more and more bold each day.." He turned to Lan Wangji, "Lan Zhan... do you really feel like that? Am I too troublesome for you?"

"Never."

"You love me?"

"Mn. Love Wei Ying.

"You see!" Wei Wuxian threw his arms into the air in enunciation. "He just doesn't understand. And do you want to know why? It's because he's single! Maybe if he found himself a partner, *then* would he—"

His words suddenly slowed into an unintelligible slur. "What..?" He pressed a trembling hand to his forehead to stable himself. "Lan Zhan—"

Lan Wangji reached out a hand to catch his falling husband, but his limbs fell down like jelly until he saw his world tilt upside-down.

They both were swept into an unconscious state.

Everyone awoke with a sudden gasp.

Throughout the darkness of the room, Wei Wuxian could faintly make the outlines of other people of various heights and statures. His theory of others being in the same area was soon confirmed by the sound of multiple unidentifiable voices that he didn't seem to recognise.

Wei Wuxian felt through his robes before he eventually found the entrance to his qiankun pouch within his sash and pulled out a talisman. Thankfully, it was a fire talisman, considering the lines of cinnabar his fingers could feel through the material. He immediately activated it, and was finally able to identify where he was using the illumination provided.

The room was tremendously large; the talisman within his hand couldn't even cover a fifth of its entire perimeter! The walls were made of hard stone; rocky and crooked, with damp spots between the cracks and crevices. The floor in which he stood on was cold and also made of stone, although the surface was *much* smoother than that of the walls. The most noticeable thing, however, was how the place was *brimming* with such *dense* resentful energy that even with a weak core like Mo Xuanyu's, Wei Wuxian could sense it.

"Jingyi! Get off me!" The voice of a young man—that he recognised to be Jin Ling—disrupted the silence.

"Think about calming that temper of yours first, *young mistress!*" Another—Jingyi, he realised—exclaimed.

"Shut up! Do not call me young mistress!"

"You act like one so you are one! If you want me to stop then you should just grow up!"

"You—"

Lan Sizhui walked towards the two, hauling one off of the other. "Jin Ling, Jingyi, let's not fight."

"Where are we?" Nie Huaisang exclaimed nervously. Wei Wuxian couldn't see the man, but replied, "That's what I'd like to know.. Lan Zhan, are you there?"

"Mn."

Allowing the relief of his husband's presence to comfort his heart, Wei Wuxian turned towards the wall, where his friend was curiously standing. "Wen Ning."

Wen Qionglin immediately understood his instruction and briskly walked to the wall. He clenched his palm into a fist and struck at the rock, attempting to make even a dent but to no avail. "Young Master Wei... I can't break through."

Wei Ying walked over to the fierce corpse and gently knocked on the wall with a layer of qi on his knuckles. It produced three, taunting 'da da da's but instead of crumbling into his hands, it only made his knuckles bloom into a bright, sore red. "Ai- It hurts so much. What kind of wall is this?"

A presence appeared beside him, and before he knew what was happening, Lan Wangji had grabbed his hand and had already begun to send him spiritual energy to heal the wound. It wasn't really necessary, considering that Wei Wuxian now had a core of his own, but the thought was what really mattered.

Lan Wangji suddenly paused, his lips pulling into a frown. "I can't access my golden core."

Wei Wuxian blinked, "Really? That's weird, I don't feel any different."

Jiang Wanyin—"Jiang Cheng, you're here too?!"—grumbled, "Of course you don't. You can't even call that small *thing* a golden core."

"But, Lan Zhan..." Wei Wuxian muttered. "I was able to use my qi to burn this talisman."

Lan Wangji pulled a talisman from within his sleeve and infused it with his qi. The talisman lit up, indicating that it was working. Lan Wangji reasoned, "I think we can use *little* bits of qi, such as using a talisman or doing a charm spell, but not *masses* of it, such as doing a qi transfer."

At their conversation, multiple others within the room began to try to access their spiritual energy but to no avail.

"So it's true..."

"I don't feel mine either.."

"What's happening?!"

Sect leader Yao snapped, "Isn't it obvious? This is the doing of the Yiling Patriarch! I knew we should have never trusted him!"

Wei Wuxian retorted with a scoff, "Why would I even *need* to do that? With or without your golden cores, I could take you down easily."

Sect Leader Yao's cheeks flared red in anger. "How arrogant! You don't need a reason to kill! Need I remind you? You're the Yiling Patriarch! Who knows what you're thinking? For all we knew, you could be planning world domination!"

A middle-aged cultivator gasped, "World domination?! How brazen!"

Wei Wuxian snorted, "You overestimate me. What use for the world would I have when its inhabitants are such fools?"

"You have deluded the righteous Hanguang-Jun and taken over the Lan sect! What more could you want, Wei Wuxian?!"

"Right! Release Hanguang-Jun right now! He's innocent!"

"Get your minds out of the gutter, you old geezers." A woman sneered, "I hope you didn't forget about how his name was cleared just recently."

"Being framed a couple times by that dog Jin Guangyao doesn't change *who* he is and what he's done in the past!"

The arguing came to a halt when Lan Xichen cleared his throat. "Let's not be hasty with accusations. Most importantly, we need to figure out why we are here."

"Finally someone speaks to me with reason." Wei Ying hummed. "Well, after a bit of observing, I couldn't help but notice... that the resentful energy here resembles that of the burial mounds—"

Many gasps echoed throughout the room.

"The Burial mounds?"

"It truly is your doing!"

"*Oh, not again..*"

Wei Wuxian, seemingly angered, forced a smile. "If I was going to trap you here, seal your golden cores and kill you all, why would I put *myself* with you? What idiot would even do that?"

From within his grave, Wei Wuxian could *see* Su She's eyebrow twitch.

And then, like moths to a flame, all of the juniors made their way to Wei Wuxian and immediately began to defend him.

"Yeah! He's right!"

"Don't slander him with those flimsy accusations!"

"Do you feel no shame?"

Wei Ying patted each of their heads affectionately, one after the other. "Thanks, kids."

And then, all at once, a screen behind them lit up, illuminating the entirety of the room.

Beside the screen was a platform. Written on the platform in italic golden text was the words: **[Regain those that are lost]** Below thee beautiful, intricately-written calligraphy was a large green **[Yes]** and a red **[No.]**

His curiosity piqued, Lan Jingyi did what others dared not to do, and nonchalantly walked up to the platform. "What's this?"

Wei Wuxian, Lan Wangji, and many others in the room yelled at him at the same time, "Don't touch anything!"

However, they were too late, for Jingyi had already pressed **[Yes]**

Startled by the multitude of voices, he immediately retracted his hand, "Ah- Sorry.."

A blinding flash of white threw light upon the room, causing many to close or cover their eyes. But when they next opened them, what they saw left them in awe.

Because in front of the screen stood perfectly healthy, and *alive* people.

Alive people who were once *dead*.

All of the cultivators present were in an uproar.

To the very left, clad in her usual lilac robes, was *Jiang Yanli*, who was holding hands with *Jin Zixuan*. And they both looked so *happy*, which only increased Wei Wuxian's growing feeling of dread because it was just a reminder of everything he ruined.

He didn't even register Jiang Cheng leaving his side and rushing to ~~their~~ his sister, throwing himself into her arms and pushing the Jin aside.

Standing beside the reuniting siblings, their expressions of pure *horror*, were, of course, their parents: Yu Ziyuan and Jiang Fengmian. As soon as they saw their children, they were visibly trying to retain their tears as they joined the heartfelt reunion.

Wei Wuxian looked away.

He didn't even know what to do with himself anymore. His hands were shaking, teeth nervously pulled at his lip, and eyes darted around the room like flies, desperately trying to look at anything but *them*.

Was he supposed to be happy? Happy after seeing the very people he murdered come back to life? Happy to be reminded of everything he *could have saved*, but *didn't* because of his incapability and selfishness? Or was he supposed to be sad? Sad that he was no longer a part of their joyous family, sad that *his shijie* Jiang Yanli would never look at him sweetly, with warmth in her eyes, and softly call him "A-Xian" like she once did?

What was he supposed to do now? Laugh with them and pretend like nothing happened? Pretend like he didn't utterly destroy their family, and crumble it piece-by-piece until it completely fell apart?

Lan Wangji pulled Wei Wuxian into his chest, protectively covering him with his long white sleeves. "Wei Ying, don't cry."

Wei Wuxian didn't even notice the soreness of his eyes until he heard those words.

Upon hearing the name, Jiang Yanli looked up from the embrace she shared with her family, her eyes sobbingly wet. "A-Xian..?"

Nobody, not even *a single person* in the room, missed how Wei Wuxian's breath hitched.

Jiang Yanli walked across the room until she was standing before her brother and reached out a trembling hand, "A-Xian, is that really you?"

Wei Ying pushed his sobbing face further into Lan Wangji's chest, soaking the white fabric grey with his tears.

"A-Xian.." Jiang Yanli continued quietly, "A-Xian. I'm so glad you're alright.."

It was her words that made Wei Wuxian finally remove his head from within the embrace. "Shi.. jie..?" From behind her and into the distance, he saw Jiang Cheng *crying*. And from what he knew, Jiang Cheng *never* cried.

Why was she calling him so sweetly, as if nothing had happened? Why were her words so affectionate, so *loving*, when she was speaking to *him*? He killed her, he killed her *husband*; he made their child *parentless*.

"A-Xian.." Jiang Yanli choked down a sob. "A-Xian, I.. I wanted to tell you... I've always wanted to tell you.. It's not your fault. I don't—I *have never* blamed you for what happened to A-Xuan. Nor to me or A-Ling... So *please*.. Would you *please* look at your shijie, *hm*?"

Wei Wuxian's lips opened, as if he wanted to speak, but then he violently shuddered and sudden tears were falling down his face and... and it was just too much— "*Shijie...*"

"A-Xian!" Jiang Yanli gasped as she pulled him away from Lan Wangji and into her arms. "A-Xian, I'm here. Shijie's here for you."

"Sh-Shijie.. It's- It's all my fault..!" Wei Wuxian sniffled. "If only.. If only I was stronger, I could have protected you! If only I was capable of controlling my own power, I would never have lost control... If only..."

"If only I was better..."

Jiang Yanli choked down yet another sob as she combed her fingers through his hair comfortingly, "A-Xian, it's alright. I'm here... Don't cry, A-Xian."

When Wei Wuxian finally calmed down, he was able to properly *observe* his shijie in what felt like forever. She now looked much healthier than before; gone were her mourning robes, the dark circles under her eyes from lack of sleep, and the pale hue to her skin.

From behind him, within the crowd who were watching the scene, he noticed Jin Ling staring at his mother with both *astonishment* and *longing*. Wei Wuxian chuckled mildly to himself before pulling Jin Ling from within the mass of people and once again made his way beside his sister with teary eyes. "Shijie, look! The Little Peacock has certainly grown, hasn't he?"

Jiang Yanli threw her hands to her mouth as she gasped, "...A-Ling?"

Jin Ling's eyes widened, "A-Niang..?" His eyes darted to the man dressed in gold, standing beside her. "A-Die..?"

Jin Zixuan smiled at his crying wife and son and embraced them both. "A-Ling, you've grown up so well.. You're so handsome; you look just like me from when I was younger."

Jiang Yanli fondly rolled her eyes at his comment.

When they all pulled away, from within his peripheral vision, Wei Wuxian noticed Wen Qing blabbering to her younger brother, minutely picking out the words "relieved" and "happy" from her seemingly-endless speech.

He tackled Wen Qing into a hug, making sure it was tight enough so she wouldn't be able to pull away. "Qing-Jie!"

"Oh, if it isn't my lazy, incompetent and least-favourite didi." She joked before returning the embrace. "How have you been, Wuxian?"

"I've been great! I even cleared my name and *married* Lan Zhan!"

"Wow, it certainly took you long enough.."

Another person within the room exclaimed loud enough for all to hear, "Wei Wuxian! Did you not learn anything after your death? Why are you still mingling with those Wen dogs?"

Another unsheathed their sword, "I think we should kill them all before they start a war again!" And then, before anyone could react, the same person fell to the floor with a nosebleed.

"You idiot! Did you forget our golden cores were sealed?"

"Yeah! What were you thinking?"

"That's right! You're an idiot!"

Meanwhile, in another section of the room, Jin Guangshan was one step away from snapping Jin Guangyao's neck. His lips pulled into a snarl, he recalled the humiliating death he was forced to endure by that little deviant and *oh*, did his anger flare. "You unfilial bastard! How dare you!"

Lan Xichen was quick to redeem the situation, jumping in front of Jin Guangyao as he held his sheathed sword out in warning. "Senior Jin, I ask that you do not be hasty. We can settle personal matters once we have left this... place, for it is unwise to cause bloodshed in our current situation. *Jin Guangyao* has committed heinous acts, and he will be dealt with appropriately in due time."

Jin Guangshan privately huffed to himself before sending one last glare to Jin Guangyao and turning away. "You worthless bastard. I should have killed you when I had the chance."

Jin Guangyao turned to face Lan Xichen, his hands briefly trembling as they lied at both his sides, and mumbled longingly, "...Er-ge.."

Lan Xichen clenched his fists, blinked away the tears that were brought to the surface and turned away.

He didn't look back.

When Nie Huaisang saw his brother in the flesh, saying he was shocked would most certainly be an understatement.

Wei Wuxian watched as the headshaker dropped his favourite fan to the floor like he hadn't been boasting about it a few hours ago and ran towards Nie Mingjue with hopeful eyes. "Da-Ge!"

Nie Mingjue welcomed his younger brother into his arms, "Huaisang, you've certainly aged."

"Da-ge!" Nie Huaisang cried, as if wishing for reassurance that everything was *real* and was *really happening*. "Da-ge! Da-ge!"

Watching the scene, Wei Wuxian exhaled a well-deserved sigh, considering everything that's happened.

The one downside to everyone coming back to life was that they'd be after his head the second they realised he was alive *too*. (He didn't really want to be on the other side of BaXia, thank you very much!)

They shouldn't recognise him in Mo Xuanyu's body... probably. (Wei Wuxian was completely oblivious to the fact that they were too busy to even look at him, thus they didn't know he was alive.) He'd been told a couple times that he was beginning to look *more and more* like

himself and *less* like Mo Xuanyu throughout the years. For the first time, Wei Wuxian prayed that it wasn't true.

But when he saw Jiang Cheng's unnaturally delighted expression at seeing his family, guilt once again rose within Wei Wuxian's heart. He watched as they cried, he watched as they mourned, he watched as they smiled, he also watched as the screen behind them lit up—wait what?

"Hey what's that?" He innocently questioned, rendering the room silent.

Nie Mingjue, Jin Zixun, Jin Guangshan and all those who bore hatred for him turned around and *glared*.

Wei Wuxian violently shuddered, feeling nervous all of a sudden. "What?"

Nie Mingjue slowly walked towards him, his intimidatingly deep voice booming throughout the cave. "Yiling Patriarch, you're back.. We killed you once and we won't hesitate to do it again!"

It was then that Lan Wangji once again stood before Wei Wuxian, holding Bichen out with a threatening air, his gaze piercingly cold. "*No.*"

Jin Guangshan exclaimed, "Second Young Master Lan, what is the meaning of this?!"

Lan Wangji turned to the Jin with a calm gaze, and repeated, "*No.*"

His face looking like the incarnation of fury, Jin Guangshan roared to Lan Qiren, "Is this how the Gusu Lan Clan teaches its disciples?!"

Lan Qiren huffed, "Believe me, I want that demonic cultivator out of my nephew's life as much as you do. But there's no use fighting Wangji; he won't ever stand down."

Wei Wuxian sighed, his hand falling to his side. "Aiya, did you all forget about the thing behind you? Or is it just me who sees it?"

The heads of all within the room immediately snapped to the screen. Lan Sizhui walked up to Lan Jingyi, who was *still* presently fiddling with the platform, apparently having not learned his lesson before. "Jingyi, can you explain to us what you are doing?"

Lan Jingyi beamed, "Sizhui, Wei-Qianbei, Hanguang-Jun! There's writing!"

Wei Wuxian made his way to the two Lans, peering over Lan Jingyi's shoulder to see. "What? Didn't we tell you not to touch anything?"

From *another* corner in the room, Wen Ruohan smirked and rubbed his chin in curiosity. "Hm.. Qing-er, considering Wei Wuxian had the ability to kill me, do you think—"

Hearing the words 'Wei Wuxian' and 'Killed me', Wen Qing snapped, "Shut up!"

Every single person in the room came to a halt as silence befell the atmosphere.

"What are you doing, woman?! You're gonna get us all killed!"

"Yeah! He's gonna kill us all again!"

"Are you stupid or just a lunatic?!"

Wen Ruohan chuckled a chuckle that instantly threaded goosebumps through people's skin, "Wen Qing, looks like you haven't changed." He dismissively waved a hand in the air as he continued, "It's fine, It's fine. Qing-er meant nothing by it, now did you, Qing-er?"

To Lan Jingyi, Wen Ruohan's laughter sounded like '*that one song that would play at your funeral while everyone's busy crying their hearts out over his coffin*'. In pure shock, he startled at the sound—just as everyone else did, he can defend!!--and accidentally pressed a button on the platform.

The very button that said **[Begin]**

On the screen, large text appeared. **[Episode One (第一集)]**

Everyone immediately turned to him with the most *furious* glares they could muster, "*Lan! Jingyi!*"

Lan Jingyi nervously laughed, internally praying that these feral strangers wouldn't throttle him to his death, and scratched the back of his head, "Whoops?"

Chapter End Notes

Why on EARTH did I make these chapters so long? Its such a pain in the backside to rewrite and takes for-literally-ever

Xianshe I - The Present

Chapter Summary

Wei Wuxian awakens as Mo Xuanyu of the Mo Manor.

Chapter Notes

Revised 16/07/22

ALSO sorry for the long chapter, I got carried away while editing lmao.

(I decided to follow the Manhua and Donghua because, like, why not?)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

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"The Yiling Patriarch Wei Wuxian has died! That's such great news!"

Throughout the darkness of the room, it was quite *terribly* obvious when a certain Wei jumped out of his skin at the words. Many questioning glances were sent in his direction, although most were just trying to figure out what just happened.

“Who said that?”

“Old Liu, that sounded suspiciously similar to your voice!!”

"Me?! Old Chang, you've got to be as *deaf* as you are *blind*!! I haven't spoken as much as a *word* this whole time!"

"You say that yet you just said 18 words just now!! Old Liu, are you a lunatic, stupid, or are you just generally an idiot?"

"You were really counting that..? But everything aside, that was certainly not me! When Wei Wuxian died, I was at my grandparent's house!"

"... You have *grandparents*? At *your age*?"

"My mother and father, what's the difference?!"

If Jiang Yanli wasn't the very incarnation of fury that very second, then her reputation as the Violet Spider's daughter would all be for naught! But despite that, she pulled at her lip and retained her anger, for that's exactly how she had been taught to.

She had been taught to stay a calm and composed noble lady, which only resulted in her abandoning A-Xian when he needed her the most.

And of course, she was doing that again. Because behind her mask of bravery, she was a *coward*. A coward that couldn't even prevent the slandering of her own brother.

Jiang Yanli's eyes watered with unshed tears as she stared down at her lap, where her fists had been clenched. And then another—a much larger—hand settled on top of hers, squeezing her own reassuringly.

When she next looked up, it was to the sight of A-Xuan's comforting smile. She smiled back, even if tears continued to build within her eyes.

"Really? Who killed him?" A third party, seemingly oblivious of the happenings in the cultivation world, curiously asked.

The screen, which was no longer black, showed a series of memories. They varied from the sunshot campaign, burial mounds siege, and the many acts of evil in which Wei Wuxian committed.

"What's this?"

"Is that a painting?"

"How weird!"

"Look, look! The picture is moving!"

"Could this be the work of *Wei Wuxian*?"

"How would Wei Wuxian do *this*?"

“What I’m more interested to know is what’s happening right now… Is no one even questioning *why* we’re here in the first place?”

“There’s no point! We already know *whose* fault it is, after all!”

“Right, right!” Another agreed. “Who else but Wei Wuxian would do this? He says he didn’t, but I don’t see anyone else in this *room* doing such a thing. Not even Wen Ruohan! Look, he just looks like an old drunkard! What evil Sect Leader? I think everyone exaggerated the war!”

“Did you just hear that, Qing-er, A-Ning?” Wen Ruohan raised an eyebrow. “They say I look like an old drunkard. Really, I tried my best to get rid of the belly, but it *just won’t go away...*”

“There’s also the Ghost General over there!” A third party added. “What ferocious corpse? He looks more like a kicked puppy...”

“It’s a ruse!” Old Liu exclaimed. “I bet you *three* silver taels that this is just him trying to fool us!”

Lan Sizhui, who had never even taken an interest in betting, could wager 300 silver taels that they were about to be proven *very wrong*.

At the same time; as everything else was happening, Jiang Yanli stifled a gasp. Not only had she failed to protect her sweet A-Xian, but he had *died too!* Was everything he— everything *they* went through for naught? Was all of that fighting for nothing?

Did A-Xian die… Just as she did, with an entire catalogue of regrets he had yet to fulfil?

Now, Jin Zixuan wasn’t the type to get all sentimental, you see? So *no*, he wasn’t *angry* in the slightest, nor *sad*, nor whatever feelings *humans* feel—for Wei Wuxian.

Well, actually, that’s what he would *usually* say in his internal monologue, but now, after seeing his son for the first time in years, Jin Zixuan was in a *good mood* for once. So he’s going to defend his brother from those silly old men and give them a run for their money. (And yes, he has lots of it.)

“Who killed him?” He repeated what the unknown voice had said on the screen. His blood was *boiling* with rage, and *oh*, if bloodlust was a spark, he was about to burn down an *entire mother-fucking city*. “*Who killed him?!* What *bastard* of humankind would even *dare* to lay a hand on A-Xian? *Hm?* Spit it out, you old fools. I’ll grab this murdering bastard by the collar, and—”

“A-Xuan!” Jiang Yanli exclaimed, sending an apologetic look to the horrified group of men. “A-Xuan, it’s… It’s fine, we… it’s not our knowledge to know without A-Xian’s consent. Please calm down.”

Nobody had the courage to move. ‘*Jin Zixuan can be terrifying when he wants to be*’, they all thought.

Wen Ruohan smirked in interest, "Wei Wuxian indirectly killed me. And to think there was someone alive who was able to kill that *monster* .." He glanced towards the trembling form of the Yiling Patriarch. "Is rather interesting."

A girl muttered from within the crowd, "Oh please no , not the ‘ *interesting*’..!!"

"Who else? His shidi Jiang Cheng, leader of the Jiang Clan. The Jiang Clan of Yunmeng, Jin clan of Lanling, Lan clan of Gusu, and Nie clan of Qinghe all took the lead and burned the burial mounds to the ground."

"A-Cheng, you didn't!" Throughout the deafening silence of the crowd, a weak cry suddenly exclaimed helplessly. "A-Cheng, tell JieJie you didn't do it. A-Cheng! Answer me! A-Cheng!"

"Jie..."

"A-Cheng, please..." Jiang Yanli shook her head as if she couldn't comprehend the situation. "You... You *love* A-Xian, don't you? You would *never* do something like that. A-Cheng, won't you tell this useless Jie of yours the truth, *mm* ?"

The guilty expression blemishing her baby brother's face was enough of an answer for her, for she immediately fell to her knees, cheeks dampening with the fluid of tears as she *screamed*.

"A-Li!" Jin Zixuan cried.

"*A-Cheng!*" She wailed, pressing both palms to her face helplessly. "How could you? I *trusted you!* I made you promise me that you'd protect A-Xian! You said you'd protect him from the other clans! *You promised!*"

Jiang Cheng held out a hand weakly as he replied, "Jie, he... You *died!* What else was I supposed to do? He... he *killed you* , Jie!"

As if realising what he'd just said, Jiang Wanyin froze, looking like a deer caught in headlights. Jiang Yanli's gasp did nothing to rectify the situation, for it only morphed into yet another fit of sobs.

"A-Cheng, why would you do such a thing...? A-Xian has only done his best for us, yet you..."

"I know..." Jiang Wanyin replied weakly, his head lowering in shame.

"Jie, trust me... *I know..*"

"But the Yiling Patriarch and the four main clans were allies during the sunshot campaign, right?"

The man scoffed at the other's simple mindedness. "You call that being allies? The Jiangs raised him like their own, but the entire clan was almost wiped out because of him! What an ungrateful bastard!"

Yu Ziyuan huffed, "At Least they got that much right!"

"My Lady." Jiang Fengmian warned.

"How was it Wei Wuxian's fault that the Jiangs weren't strong enough?" A Jin remarked, "It only proves what a weak sect they are! In my opinion, Wei Wuxian would have fit in perfectly with our Jin Clan!"

A Jiang disciple retorted furiously, "You stupid Jins! Don't forget who led the siege on him in the burial mounds! That's right—it was your Sect Leader, *Jin Guangshan!* And the siege didn't even succeed, for Wei-shixiong completely *annihilated* you all!"

"Hah! You Jiangs are no better! Just because he was once a Jiang himself, Wei Wuxian spared your entire clan out of mercy! And yet you dare claim to have been the main driving force of the war! How shameless!"

"Well— At least our Clan Leaders were all honourable men! Not like that *fiend* Jin Guangshan and that *dog* Jin Guangyao!"

"We had *two* chief cultivators rule the cultivation world—who were from our clan—in a row! Our Clan leaders didn't tie themselves down with a petty woman like yours did!"

Fingers were immediately pointed, their underlying ruthlessness not a surprise to many.

"You!!"

"You!!"

"I heard he has another evil weapon. The stygian tiger amulet."

"He destroyed it before he died. At least he did one good thing."

'That certainly was a good thing I destroyed it back then... ' Wei Wuxian thought briefly. 'If I had left it in the hands of the clan leaders, another war would have begun. At least when Xue Yang and Jin Guangyao repaired it, the amulet wasn't as effective as it once was.'

"How did Wei Wuxian create the Stygian Tiger Amulet?" A curious junior asked.

"Apparently, he absorbed mountains of resentment from the *Burial Mounds* and forged it into a weapon! I don't think that's true though..."

"It's definitely not!" Another replied. "Actually, I heard that Wei Wuxian carved the amulet with the *strongest material in the entire world*, only found at the Burial Mounds! And then, using his demonic cultivation, cast an array on the weapon!"

A third theorised, "That's wrong! I think It was actually an artefact left behind by the great Xue Chonghai!"

"Wouldn't it be more efficient to ask Wei Wuxian *himself*? I mean, he's right here with us, after all..."

"But I think it's more interesting to remain a mystery! Besides, a friend of mine already asked him once, and Wei Wuxian replied with 'If disclosing this information would mean that *it* is potentially created again, then it is a secret I shall bring to the grave.' What do you think it means?"

"Hm... Maybe Wei Wuxian just doesn't want anyone to threaten his current position? After all, having the Stygian Tiger Amulet means eternal power!"

"We will never know.."

"They say he has powers beyond imagination. What if he steals somebody else's body and comes back?"

"Well, you see, various clans spent months trying to summon him but to no avail. It seems the Yiling Patriarch has truly left nothing behind." The man finished.

A woman who was listening sighed, "In the past, Wei Wuxian was a prominent figure from an established clan."

Another voiced his thoughts, "He also helped destroy the Wens. He made a name for himself at a young age! But how did he end up like this..?"

Jiang Cheng's heart got caught in his throat at the words, and he remained still, unsure what to do with himself.

'The Jiangs raised him like their own, but the entire clan was almost wiped out because of him!'

'Various clans spent months trying to summon him but to no avail... '

'How did he end up like this?'

'Because of me,' Jiang Wanyin realised with a start. *'He ended up like this because of my incapability.. If only I hadn't gotten caught that day... if only...'*

'If I hadn't been such a useless piece of sh't, becoming crippled and uselessly wallowing in self pity to gain everyone's sympathy, then he wouldn't have lied to me and given me his core. He therefore wouldn't have become a demonic cultivator...'

'A-Jie would have lived. So would he. And so many unfortunate others.'

"Fugitive life, I'd say. Fugitive life."

The scene slowly faded into black. Except there was no longer the darkness from before, and a stunning light shone from above, illuminating the room. Many looked up in awe, their eyes sparkling with curiosity and wonder.

“What's that light?”

“Is it— Could it be the heavens?”

“It is! They have shown us this because it is an important piece of history, involving the entire cultivation world. Do you think... that everyone here has been chosen by the immortals to ascend to Godhood?!”

“But— But Wei Wuxian is here too! And so many other fiends!”

“Look! The.. the painting is showing us an image again! Do you think the immortals are trying to communicate with us?”

The screen displayed, **Mo Village, 13 years later.**

“....Mo Village?” Lan Jingyi questioned in a small mumble.

“You don’t think...” Lan Sizhui and he both shared a look. “That we will see the events that happened from then, do you?”

Jin Ling furrowed his eyebrows, “Why are the immortals showing us *this*? If you two happened to be in Mo Village 13 years after Wei Wuxian died, then.....” He trailed off.

Another exclaimed, “This should be where Wei Wuxian was resurrected!”

“The first part was discussing his death, and now it’s his resurrection... what do you think this means? Are the Gods trying to show us something?”

“I have no idea... We will just have to wait and see.”

Interrupting the silence, a weak and raspy voice suddenly spoke, "With my blood..."

The screen showed the face of a young man with long, dark locks of hair that was tied into a bun. Most of the hair had fallen out of the hairstyle, and had fallen in many different directions, making the picture of a messy, unkempt madman. His eyes were pulled wide open, and his mouth was pulled into a wobbly attempt of a grin, briefly faltering at the sides.

At the pools of blood falling to the floor in sheets of red like specs of stained snow, the audience cringed in discomfort, and many made a motion of closing their eyes like children, as if the image they were seeing would disappear the moment they did so.

If Nie Huaisang was leisurely fanning himself with a small smirk, no one was watching to notice.

“Isn’t that...” Jin Ling’s eyes flew open at the revelation. “Wei Wuxian?!”

“Eh? Senior Wei? Why does he look like that?” Lan Jingyi asked. “But... if you look closely, their faces aren’t identical, only similar. There’s no way that’s Senior Wei.”

“I may be wrong, but...” Lan Sizhui gulped. “It’s been a few years, so my memories aren’t quite clear, however.... Isn’t that Mo Xuanyu?”

Everyone in the room immediately began to chatter amongst themselves at the theory.

“Mo Xuanyu?”

“Isn’t that Jin Guangshan’s kid?”

“Wait, really? Which one?”

“Wasn’t his name Liu Xuanyu, not Mo Xuanyu....? Oh wait, that’s his other kid. My bad.”

“I may be wrong, but it appears as if near eighty percent of our population are related to Jin Guangshan. *‘Which kid’*, you may ask? Well, I was talking about the kid related to that *other kid* over there. Oh wait, I meant his brother.”

Another in the room mumbled, “You’re so funny, Huizhong.”

"Drawn by my hand..."

"I sacrifice my body to you..."

"My soul shall disappear..."

"Humbly I await you, Yiling Patriarch..."

"WEI WUXIAN!"

Jin Guangshan paused, and then leaned closer to the screen in interest. He found that voice sounding *terribly* familiar..

The scarlet glow that was emitted from the array slowly dissipated. The boy's shadow was shown as he fell to the side and passed out.

Before the screen yet again faded into black, Jin Guangshan made sure to study the array *perfectly*, to scrutinise *every detail*, to imprint it to his *memory*. Because in all of Wei Wuxian's transcripts that were taken by the clans, *this* was one that he hadn't seen.

Jin Guangshan (was)n't an idiot. He could tell when strings were being pulled by a mastermind, and when puppets were dancing on the stage, fulfilling their roles. Meng Yao was one *wild* little beast, in his opinion. While Jin Guangshan was the mastermind, Meng Yao was *his little puppet*. No—he was a puppet whose string had snapped unexpectedly. A puppet that slipped from his hands, like the slimy ungrateful bastard he was.

They say that nearly everything can be repaired if the correct precautions take place. The small remains of the string was *still* attached to Meng Yao at this very moment, and Jin Guangshan was going to take advantage of that. He would put it together with his own two hands, permanently damaged that it is.

And when he finally leaves this damned place, he would take the position of Sect Leader once again. On second thought, he needed to restock on heirs.. His only heir, Jin Zixuan, had become a fool after marrying that plain Jiang Woman. He even refused to take a concubine of his own. And the girl wasn't even that pretty, nor smart—just what did Zixuan see in her?

Jin Guangshan looked around the room, sneering at all of the women who backed away from his gaze. The Ghost General's dog of a sister was quite the beauty. Perhaps he could take her in as a concubine..

An heir shared between them would be quite the sight for eyes, especially if it was female...

Wei Wuxian's eyes opened. He looked to the side with much effort.

'I'm dead. I have been for quite a few years.'

Wei Ying scrunched his nose in confusion, "Did I say that out loud back then?"

"Wow."

"You-"

"Oh."

"That's-"

"Um-"

"Damn."

Someone clicked their tongue, apparently deciding to end the awkward reactions, "*I'm dead*. Is that the first thing you say when you've been resurrected? What about the overly-dramatic entrance? What about going mad and taking over the cultivation world? ...Even silence would have been better than '*I'm dead*'.. ."

Jiang Cheng rolled his eyes, "I'm sure he was *itching* to be dramatic."

Wei Wuxian averted his eyes, desperately pushing down the memory of him traumatising the poor Lans back in Cloud Recess with his shamelessness...

Suddenly, the door was forced open as a Young Master ran in, a servant trailing behind. "Go Kill yourself, you damn cut-sleeve! Stop playing dead!"

Wei Wuxian was harshly kicked in the side, and he rolled over with hands clutching his sore injury.

Lan Wangji's aura quite literally screamed *the phrase 'You!'* that Jiang Cheng was so proud of. He grasped Bichen that lay at his side, eyes flaming with fury. '*Mo Ziyuan...*'

Upon seeing his brother's state, Lan Xichen weakly cried, "Wangji! Mo Ziyuan is already... he has already passed; there is no use seeking vengeance..."

The perpetrator scowled, "Whose land do you think you're living on? Whose rice are you eating? Whose money are you spending? What's wrong with taking a few of your belongings? They're mine to begin with, anyways!"

Jin Ling rolled his eyes, "You clearly just stated that they belonged to him. So stupid..."

"Now I'm wondering *which* Mo was the true lunatic..." Lan Jingyi muttered under his breath.

Wei Wuxian rubbed the sore spot at the back of his head and internally berated, 'That's quite a lot of courage you have to kick me, the patriarch!'

"That kid is so dead. He not only *cursed* Wei Wuxian, the Yiling Patriarch, but also *kicked* him. I pray for whatever family he belongs to..."

"Indeed. His fate, from here on out, is officially sealed!"

"You pray for him, whereas I curse him! I'm only curious about *how* Wei Wuxian will murder this kid. Will he use demonic cultivation? Or his hands?"

"Uh, excuse me? You're condoning the slaughtering of children.. And you call yourself a cultivator?"

"A cultivator? More like a delinquent. You're no better than that Xue Yang."

"Xue Yang?"

"Uh... apparently he's a famous delinquent too. Never heard of him though. My shizun only taught us about his history for one lesson.."

At the same time, in a far, far corner of the room, Wei Wuxian's pale face was as white as a sheet of crisp snow. "I... I never said that aloud. Lan Zhan, you... do you think that they can...?"

Lan Wangji narrowed his eyes intently, "It is possible."

"Oh god..." Wei Wuxian pressed his hands to his eyes nervously. "Lan Zhan, I don't want them to hear..!! Please, make it stop... Lan Zhan, please!"

"I..." Lan Wangji clenched his fists, suddenly feeling very incapable. "I... Wei Ying, I'm sorry.. but I am unable to..."

Mo Ziyuan grabbed Wei Wuxian by the collar, hauling him up. "How dare you tell father and mother! Did you really think that anyone in this house is going to listen to you?!"

Lan Qiren's eyebrow furrowed in disgust, "Who is this young man? How rude." Nobody, however, missed how he hadn't used the term 'Young Master' to address the Mo.

Finally coming to terms at the sudden revelation, Wei Wuxian tilted his head, trying to remember the name. "His name was.. What was it, Lan Zhan? Mo... Mo Zixun?"

An enraged Jin in the background exclaimed, "THAT'S MY NAME YOU IDIOT!"

"He is Mo Ziyuan." Lan Wangji clarified. "The cousin of Mo Xuanyu."

Some servants began to search the room for valuables as others smashed the furniture under their Young Master's orders.

The Lans began muttering something along the lines of "Being disrespectful is forbidden.. Touching others' things without permission is forbidden.. Fighting is forbidden..."

Everyone decided to ignore them, well, the Jiangs in particular, of course.

A servant walked up to Mo Ziyuan and bowed, "Young Master, everything's been smashed!"

"How did you finish it so quickly?"

"There's nothing much inside this shack anyways."

Mo Ziyuan shoved Wei Wuxian to the floor, "As if anyone wants these piles of junk! Now that I've smashed everything, let's see how you're gonna tell on me in the future!"

"How arrogant!" Sect Leader Yao exclaimed, earning himself many incredulous looks.

A Jiang disciple quietly mumbled, "Arrogant? Did I just hear *Sect Leader Yao* say that?"

"Tsk, Talk about a hypocrite..."

Nie Mingjue furrowed his eyebrows and crossed his arms in a show of power, "He's in the wrong, yet he continues to bully this... poor *shell of a man* whom Wei Wuxian has possessed. If he was a part of my Clan, I would have kicked him out long ago!"

"Possessed? Wei Wuxian didn't really possess him, though, did he? We all saw how he was forcefully put into that body regardless of his wishes."

"Oh! Now that I think of it, that's why Zidian never worked back then! Since Wei Wuxian *technically* didn't possess the body, his soul was never expelled!"

"Many things appear to be falling together now. Perhaps this is what the immortals wanted to do? To show us the things we are ignorant of to this day..."

"Are you proud of yourself just because you've studied cultivation for a few years?! Well, how does it feel when you've been kicked back home like a stray dog?!"

Mo Ziyuan beckoned his servants to follow as he walked out of the door, "Watch carefully! Don't let him outside anytime this month, or he'll make a fool of himself again!"

"Yes!"

The door was slammed shut, leaving Wei Wuxian—Now Mo Xuanyu—alone in the small hut.

Wei Wuxian felt sympathy in his heart as he commented, "What a pitiful man. He was treated no better than a slave by his own family, no less. And I can't even thank him for resurrecting me... Lan Zhan, without Mo Xuanyu, I would have never..."

"Mn," Lan Wangji hummed in understanding. "Mo Xuanyu, however, must be in a better place now since the wishes he put his soul on the line for have been fulfilled. You did good, Wei Ying."

Lan Jingyi mumbled, "It's a wonder how Mo Xuanyu managed to survive that long. If I didn't know better, I'd think he was the family's dog! With all that suffering, I'm surprised he didn't kill himself sooner..."

Lan Sizhui exclaimed, "*Jingyi-!!*"

Wei Wuxian held his bloodied face with one hand, pushing his bangs up with the other.

"Huh..?" He blinked and then stared at the array placed underneath his feet. "Hm? This looks sort of familiar.. It seems like something I've made.."

Wei Wuxian reached for a book that was placed beside him and carefully read the open page.

"Ah, I see. It's *Xianshe*."

Wei Wuxian huffed in amusement, "Since when was I categorised as a Sinister Ghoul? I just had a terrible reputation and a horrifying death. Really, how absurd.."

Sect Leader Yao snorted, "Since when weren't you a sinister Ghoul? The world would be better off if you died again!"

His slandering comment came to a close as he noticed his mouth had been forcefully closed shut, unable to open!

He furiously turned to the Lan Clan, the only possible suspects for this, and boy was Lan Wangji looking *furious*.

He turned back to the screen as quickly as he turned away, the hidden sight of Lan Wangji the only sustenance of his trembling hands.

Wei Wuxian flinched when he felt a soreness tingle in his arm. He pulled down his sleeve. Long and deep cuts were dripping seas of blood onto his robes. He clicked his tongue, "Tsk tsk, just how much did he hate me?"

Everyone inhaled a harsh breath at the wound.

"Damn... poor Mo Xuanyu, bro... I kinda feel bad for him."

"If I knew this was happening at the time, I would have offered to help!"

"No wonder he became a lunatic.."

"At least now that he has summoned him, Wei Wuxian can get revenge for him."

The demonic cultivator sighed, "Now I'll have to grant this brat Mo Xuanyu's wish. Or else, if the curse causes a backlash, my soul will be annihilated, never to be born again."

Jin Guangshan frowned, "Mo Xuanyu.. It sounds familiar."

"*Every kid* sounds familiar to you..." Lan Jingyi mumbled. "Just stop having children; it's not that hard..."

"*Jingyi!!*"

Wei Wuxian's eyes widened as he gasped. "WAIT!"

Everyone flinched at the sudden yell. Some instinctively stood up in anticipation.

He absentmindedly scratched the back of his head. "What.. Was Mo Xuanyu's wish.. again?"

Jiang Cheng groaned into his hands, "This idiot..."

Traversing throughout the room was the echoing sound of people *facepalming*.

Wei Ying felt his soul slipping away, "There's nothing.. He didn't say anything.."

Rage made its way to his face as he clutched the ends of the book with a tight grip, "Where did that brat get this incomplete copy?! He missed the step of reading his wish!"

Yet, Mo Xuanyu's soul had already returned to the Earth. He can't even be summoned back.

"*That's* the consequence? What idiot would miss their chance at reincarnation just because of some young brat being a bully?!" A middle-aged cultivator yelled.

"Yeah!" Another exclaimed. "If I were him, I would have beaten him silly like *this* ! And *this*!"

"Really, how absurd. How outrageously absurd."

"Although I don't know what the wish specifically is, judging from the brat's way of thinking, it's probably to wipe out the entire clan."

As he said this, it made all of the spectators unconsciously shiver. Although they knew of the Yiling Patriarch and his evil misdeeds, experiencing it first hand was frightening.

Jiang Cheng idly commented, "I still wonder how you can say that so casually.."

Jin Zixun smirked, "It's obvious he killed them all."

"Senior Wei didn't kill anyone! It was the Ghost hand!" Lan Jingyi interjected.

"He obviously—Ghost what?"

He shrugged, "After all, I'm the legendary immortal ungrateful villain who's out of his mind and doesn't care about anyone, not even his family and friends. Is there anyone more sinister than me?"

Wei Wuxian fell down to his knees and sighed, "Yeah, but..."

"You've got the wrong person..."

Yu Ziyuan spat, "That's right! He has never been able to do anything! We should have left him to die in the streets!"

"MY LADY!" Jiang Fengmian exclaimed.

"Am I wrong?" She huffed as she raised an eyebrow, "Because of him, our Sect was destroyed!"

"It isn't A-Xian's fault—"

"SHUT UP!" Jiang Wanyin yelled. "A-Niang, stop blaming Wei Wuxian! Why must you hate him because of his mother? It's not like he can control who A-Die loves and doesn't love!"

"Jiang Cheng! You don't know anything—" Her mouth was suddenly pulled together, as if by a spell, just like how Sect Leader Yao's was...

Everyone turned to Lan Wangji amusedly, immediately knowing who the culprit was.

Lan Xichen glanced at his brother and stifled a chuckle, "Wangji, you mustn't keep abusing the silencing spell."

Wei Wuxian defended, "Abusing the silencing spell is forbidden, I know. But Lan Zhan isn't abusing it! What's once or twice gonna do?"

"Mn." Lan Wangji agreed.

Lan Xichen sighed in amusement.

'Don't tell me that I'll be the first sinister ghoul...'

Everyone watched the screen, intently.

'In all of history...'

Jiang Cheng huffed, "What's with the dramatics? Just say it already!"

'To have just reincarnated...''

"What?" A Nie cultivator gasped in excitement. A Lan disciple who was to their left immediately shushed them.

'Before starving to death...?!"'

He was laying flat on the floor, facing down. His hand was dramatically shaking, reaching out for something. "This body's level of cultivation Isn't even enough for him to have practised inedia yet.."

The entire room facepalmed *again*.

"What's with the dramatic '*I'm dying*' act?!"

"If someone saw this, they wouldn't believe he's the Yiling Patriarch!"

At the comment, Wen Qing gently smiled. *'Wei Wuxian is still the same old him, I'm glad he didn't change for the worse after our deaths.'*

Lan Qiren sighed, no longer caring whether it was proper or not.

The doors were slowly pushed open and sunlight cascaded through the small gap.

Wei Wuxian glanced up as a cracked bowl of rice and a pair of chopsticks were harshly slammed to the floor.

A servant looked down at him and scowled, "Chop-chop! What are you waiting for? Take out the bowl when you finish!"

Lan Jingyi was *enraged*. "What?! He may have been a madman, but treating him like this is a bit much! It's like they've forgotten something called respect even existed!"

A woman sighed in pity, "It's sad knowing that there was nobody to help him. In the end, he had to resort to suicide."

The doors were slammed shut and a voice coming from the other side was faintly audible. "Why should I come to this ominous courtyard?"

Another person huffed, "A-Tong, are you delivering food to the one in there again? You just deliver one meal a day and nobody cares if you're lazy. This is such an idle task, yet you think it's ominous."

"Delivering his food is not the only work I do!"

Wei Wuxian picked up the bowl and grimaced, '*Really. I'm no better than the tiger in a flatland, the dragon in the shallow water, the phoenix without feathers.*'

Jiang Wanyin rolled his eyes, "Since when did you become so poetic?"

He began to eat the rice while briefly eavesdropping on the servants' conversation outside.

"Look at me. I'm so busy that I can't even go outside to play!"

"How can you even dare to go outside these days? With so many walking corpses out there, everyone's locking themselves in their houses."

Wei Wuxian frowned, '*Walking corpses? Seems like Mo Village hasn't been too peaceful..*'

"Today, some cultivators already came to the Mo Estate. I heard that they're from a very prominent sect! The Madam is talking to them in the main hall and everyone is watching!"

Wei Wuxian very dramatically wiped a fake tear, '*Now that he mentions them, it really does bring me back to the good old days. A prominent sect..*'

Jin Zixuan frowned, "You talk as if decades have passed. You're still mentally in your late-teens. What's with the old man act?"

Wei Wuxian chuckled at his comment, "It sounded cool. Plus, I've always thought I was mature. More than Jiang Cheng anyway."

Jiang Wanyin exclaimed, "What?!"

"Ah- I just meant how I have found myself a husband when you're still.. How should I say this without sounding mean...? You're still young, innocent and *very lonely.* "

"Lonely?! I'm not lonely! Who said I'm lonely?!"

"Jiang Cheng, any maiden who looks at your face is immediately scared away-"

"Shut up!"

"Okay, okay, I'll shut up..."

Wei Wuxian placed down the empty bowl and stood up. 'Although my looks have changed, Mo Xuanyu has also cultivated before. It'd be a pain to bump into somebody he knew. I need something to cover my face..'

He glanced towards a table that was now in tatters from being harshly abused. To be more specific, he was looking at an untouched box that sat atop it.

"Hm.. This is?"

He opened the box and stared at the rogue inside. 'Uh.. I really don't understand the ways of cut-sleeves..'

Everyone glanced at Wei Wuxian, who was shamelessly snuggling into his husband's neck. 'Sure you don't,' they all thought.

An idea rushed to his head, causing him to gasp, "!!!!"

"Right!"

"What's he gonna do *this time* ?" Jiang Wanyin sighed. "Seriously, whenever he gets an idea, it's never anything good."

He looked at himself in the mirror while dipping two fingers into the container, covering them in rouge. After a good few minutes spent applying it, he was satisfied. "Something like this should work.."

A woman gasped, "That's too much—Nononono!"

Many other women who shared her worries watched the screen with equally horrified expressions.

A servant outside shrugged, still speaking to their friend, "I don't have time to play around with you. They might give me more work afterwards."

The other chuckled, "Haha."

Wei Wuxian forced the door open, snapping the wooden plank that held it shut in the process.

He opened the door a fraction, a bored expression occupied his face. His skin was plain white from the rouge and large red circles surrounded his eyes.

The two servants saw him and yelled in fright, "AHHH!"

'So that's where he got that ridiculous getup from...' Jiang Wanyin thought, desperately trying to push away the memory.

Wei Wuxian held a hand to block out the sun from his face. 'Tsk. The sunlight is so strong...'

One of the servants huffed, "It's the lunatic?"

He stood in front of his friend protectively, "Shoo! Shoo! Go away! Why did you come out?! You-"

Wei Wuxian landed a kick in his face, sending him flying. The demonic cultivator stepped on the servant's face and smirked, "Who do you think you're talking to?"

After gently brushing his hands together, he smirked and walked away.

All of the Young juniors cheered in unison.

"Yes!"

"You show him!"

"Senior Wei is so cool!"

"Jin Ling, get out of my way! I can't see!"

"Let go of my arm! Do all Lans have the grip of a gorilla?!"

Wei Wuxian pushed his way through the gossiping crowd, eagerly awaiting the scene he was about to create.

".....A member from the young generations of our family.. Used to be a cultivator as well.."

Wei Wuxian, who was currently being squeezed between two people, jumped up and frantically waved his hand to get her attention. "I'm coming! I'm coming! Right here!"

Jiang Yanli giggled at his antics as Jiang Wanyin equally rolled his eyes.

Wei Wuxian teasingly remarked, "Cheng Cheng, if you keep rolling your eyes like that, they'll get stuck up there!"

This time, Jin Ling rolled his eyes, immediately closing them when he realised what he'd done.

'...What if they really do get stuck up there?'

The villagers made way for him to get to the front. He grinned and pointed a finger to himself, "Who was calling me earlier? Someone who used to be a cultivator, isn't that me?"

Everyone present sent him strange looks, but he paid no mind to it.

Lan Jingyi snorted in amusement, covering his mouth to muffle the laughter that tried to break through. Lan Sizhui sent him a stern look and the other immediately sat upright as if nothing had happened.

"Pardon my interruption, but these two are just like the *perfect duo..*"

"They *are!!* If only I had a best friend like that.."

'Looking at the uniform that resembles mourning clothes, it's obvious that they're from the GusuLan sect.'

Lan Qiren turned red in anger, "Mourning clothes?! How dare you mock our sect!?"

"But to be fair, he's got a point..."

"You!!"

'The clan motif of the GusuLan sect is drifting clouds. Those who wear forehead ribbons that have the drifting clouds motif sewn onto them are disciples of the clan. They must be disciples of blood relation to the Lan Clan.'

'Guest disciples, ordinary disciples, and cultivators of other surnames who depend on the Lan Sect, wear forehead ribbons without the drifting clouds motif.'

Jin Zixun frowned and crossed his arms, "How does he know so much about the Lan Sect?"

"Shixiong, he studied at Cloud Recess when he was younger, did you forget?" A Jin disciple replied.

Lan Sizhui noticed his intense gaze and tilted his head to the side, sending the other a questioning look.

They were broken out of their trance when Madam Mo slammed her hand into the table, startling those present.

"Who let him out?! Get him back in there!"

"They really are treating him like a dog! The audacity!"

Mister Mo tried to calm down his fuming wife, "Yes, yes.."

Wei Wuxian fell to the floor, crossing his legs, as well as his arms. He ignored the people yelling at him.

"You damned madman! If you don't go back now, you can wait for your punishment!"

Mister Mo grabbed him by the collar and tried to forcefully pull him away but to no avail.

The crowd snickered, whispering inaudible things to each other.

Wei Wuxian closed his eyes and smiled, "You want me to go back? Sure."

He pointed at Mo Ziyuan and frowned, "Then tell him to return the things he took from me first."

Mo Ziyuan turned red in anger, "That's nonsense! When have I ever taken your things? Why would I need to take anything from you?!"

"Yes, yes! You didn't take, you stole!"

Jiang Cheng glanced at Wei Wuxian with an incredulous stare, "Are you an idiot? That literally means the same thing!"

Madam Mo cleared her throat before speaking. "Taking? Stealing? How disrespectful. We're all part of one family. He only borrowed them because he wanted to take a look."

Ouyang Zizhen exclaimed, " *Take a look* , she says? He stole every last item Mo Xuanyu owned!"

Jiang Wanyin sighed, "Again, taking and stealing means the same thing."

"Ziyuan is your younger brother. As the older one, you shouldn't be so miserly. It's only a trivial matter, yet you're throwing a child's tantrum, making a fool of yourself. It's not as if he won't return them."

Wei Wuxian mockingly smirked, holding out an awaiting palm. "Then, return them."

"MUM!" Mo Ziyuan yelled.

Wei Wuxian stood up and patted down his knees, "Not that I think of it, not only should he not have stolen my things, he shouldn't have stolen them in the middle of the night! Sneaking around my room when it's so dark, a few people might have thought that some indecent scandals were going on."

"..Shameless..."

Nobody knew who spoke but it was most definitely a Lan.

Mo Ziyuan looked as if he were about to burst into tears any moment, "I wasn't... I didn't..."

Madam Mo glared, "What are you talking about, in front of everyone?! How shameless! Ziyuan is your cousin!"

"He didn't keep himself in check even though he clearly knows that he's my cousin-- who's the shameless one here?!" Wei Wuxian retorted.

"YOU-

Wei Wuxian absentmindedly played with his hair, twirling it around his fingers. "I wouldn't care as much if you were only losing your own face. Good thing that I'm your cousin. If I were a maiden, you would've destroyed my reputation! ..I would have still wanted to find myself a good man."

"Well you certainly found yourself one." A young cultivator commented, glancing at the two husbands.

Wei Wuxian nodded, "That's right! I actually got *the best of them all*, didn't I, Lan Zhan?"

"No," Lan Wangji lightly shook his head, "I got the best."

A young disciple commented, "...What's this dog food? No thank you.."

Jingyi muffled his laughter with a sleeve; the shaking of his shoulders was the only evidence of his amusement.

Mo Ziyuan was enraged. He glanced at a nearby chair and picked it up, swinging it in the direction of his cousin. "SHUT UP!"

He smashed it onto the ground, where Wei Wuxian had previously been. The demonic cultivator had run to the Lan disciples in the nick of time, seeking protection.

One spectator gasped, "Hey! They've started fighting! Let's get out of the way!"

"Let's stop watching! What if you get hurt?!" Another worriedly yelled.

Wei Wuxian ran and hid behind Lan Sizhui, using him as a shield. He pointed to Mo Ziyuan, "Did everyone see that? Did you? The burglar is also beating me up! How heartless!"

Everyone in the room was tempted to roll their eyes.

Mo Ziyuan pulled up his sleeves, clearly preparing to throw a punch, but was held back by a servant.

Lan Sizhui held an arm up, protectively hiding the cowering Wei Wuxian. "Young Master, words are more powerful than weapons.."

Lan Wangji glanced at his son and affectionately ruffled his hair, proudness present in his smile. "Thank you."

Lan Sizhui flushed in embarrassment, "N-No problem, A-Die..."

Madam Mo facepalmed and gently patted her child's shoulder. She turned to Wei Wuxian and then to Lan Sizhui. "This is my younger sister's son. His head isn't so bright.. Everyone from the village knows that he's a lunatic and often speaks nonsense that shouldn't be taken seriously.. Please, you mustn't..."

Wei Wuxian stood out from behind the other and scowled, "Who said that my words shouldn't be taken seriously?!" He pointed to the two Mo's, "Next time, try stealing my things again!"

His right hand clutched his left arm as an example, "Steal from me again and I'll cut off your hand!"

"Wow." Jin Ling blinked, "Uncle, I wasn't aware you knew the future."

"Wei Wuxian, have you ever considered learning *divination* ? I'm sure you'd *excel* at it."

Mo Ziyuan was at a loss for words, "You.. You- YOU BASTARD!"

Wei Wuxian mockingly pulled a face, sticking his tongue out. "Bleh Bleh Bleh!"

"Oh my god..."

"Such a tease.."

"That's so childish."

Wei Wuxian ran out of the room, leaving behind two very infuriated people, as well as amused spectators.

Lan Sizhui pressed a palm to his forehead before turning to Madam Mo. "Then.. We will use the west courtyard tonight.. Please remember the things I've said—After nightfall, close all of the windows. Do not come outside. Do not walk by the courtyard either."

Madam Mo hastily nodded, "Yes. Yes.. Please.."

Mo Ziyuan turned to his mother, "MOM! The lunatic is defaming my reputation in front of so many people! That's it?! You've told me before that he's only a—"

Before he could finish, Madam Mo cut in, "Be quiet! Can't you wait until we leave?!"

As she turned away, he glared. "That lunatic is going down tonight!"

"I feel an incoming sense of doom...."

"Me too... what do you think this kid will do?"

"My instinct tells me something *not very good..*"

Wei Wuxian was casually strolling in the west courtyard, stretching his limbs. 'So it seems that a light revenge for taking Mo Xuanyu's anger out on Mo Ziyuan Isn't nearly enough. Don't tell me that I really have to eliminate the entire Mo clan?'

"What does he mean?" A young disciple asked.

Lan Qiren stroked his goatee, "I think he was seeing whether the request was simply to humiliate them. It was especially convenient because Mo Xuanyu was a lunatic. That was quite impressive."

Wei Ying practically glowed from the unexpected praise.

The Juniors made a mental note to compliment him more.

Wei Wuxian suddenly froze when he spotted a familiar flag.

He jumped onto a roof, watching the four Lan Juniors converse. "Although the entire cultivation world seems to hate me to the bones, they're still making use of my inventions, aren't they?"

Ah.

The clan leaders selectively lowered their heads in shame.

That was exactly what they had done, wasn't it?

They scorned him for his ways of cultivation, yet they used his inventions simply because they benefited from it.

They didn't even listen to the furious and defending voices of Wei Wuxian's friends and family, for they didn't need someone telling them to know how hypocritical it was of them.

Wei Wuxian began muttering to himself, "Since these boys placed the flag formation in the West Courtyard and told others not to approach it, they must want to lead the walking corpses here and capture them in one go."

He was pulled out of his thoughts by a voice behind him, "Go back, this is not somewhere that a person like you should come."

Much to the Lan Jingyi's surprise, Wei Wuxian grabbed the spirit lure flag and jumped off the roof.

The young Lan cultivator ran after him, "Do not move it! That is not something you should take!"

Wei Wuxian stubbornly clutched it tighter, "Not giving it! Not giving it!"

"Give it back! I am going to hit you if you do not!"

Lan Wangji glanced at Lan Jingyi, who flinched at his gaze.

“Hahaha, Hanguang-Jun, what a strange thing they said.. Hit him? How rude, hahahahahaha!”

“Jingyi...” Ouyang Zizhen mumbled, “That’s too many ‘hahaha’s...”

"Nu-uh! I want it!"

Lan Sizhui held his friend back, tugging at his arm. "Jingyi, calm down. Just take the flag back. What is the use of making such a fuss?"

Lan Jingyi pointed to Wei Wuxian, who was happily lounging on the floor like he had nothing better to do in life. "Sizhui, I did not actually hit him! Look at him. He messed up the whole flag formation!"

Wei Wuxian sat up and began silently inspecting the flag. '*The motifs are drawn correctly and incantations are complete. There aren't any errors, so nothing should go wrong when it's used.*'

Lan Jingyi and Lan Sizhui froze. They turned to look at Wei Wuxian with wide, praising smiles. "Senior Wei, so you were just looking out for us?!"

"I always thought it was just to make himself look more like a lunatic.."

"Senior Wei!!"

Wei Wuxian pouted, "Did you really think I'd steal something so important from you for no reason? If I did , I'd be a *real* lunatic.."

Sizhui held a hand out to him, "Young Master Mo, the sky is growing dark, and we will quickly start capturing the walking corpses. It will be dangerous at night, so it would be best for you to return to your own room."

"This flag.." He mumbled..

'It's just that the person who drew the flags is lacking in experience. At most, the incantations would be able to attract walking corpses and other beings from within one and a half miles away. Well--they should be enough anyways.'

Wei Wuxian carelessly chucked it, "It's only a dumb flag, what's so special about it? I can draw way better than you guys!"

He jumped back up onto the roof to get away.

"Childish."

"So childish."

"Are you like three or something?" Jiang Cheng huffed.

Wei Wuxian grinned, much to the other's disgust, "Xianxian is three!" He proudly held out three fingers, to which Jiang Yanli replied, "And Xianxian is *great* at drawing, aren't you, Xianxian?"

"Yes!!"

Lan Jingyi watched, appalled. "What a lunatic!"

The other Lan disciples nodded in agreement.

"He really is insane."

"Does he feel no shame?"

"Ignorance is bliss, I guess."

"Mind your words. It is best if you come back here and help." Lan Sizhui scolded. He sighed and turned to two disciples. "You can go over there and put the flag back. The rest of you can go back to your positions."

"Yes!"

Wei Wuxian looked at his son proudly before turning to Lan Wangji, "Lan Zhan, you raised our son so well!"

The corner of Lan Wangji's lips upturned as he kissed the other's forehead. "Mn. So did Wei Ying."

Wei Wuxian watched with a smile, 'The flag formation is quite organised, and they have good manners as well. The boy leading the group is especially exceptional in terms of potential. The GusuLan sect is so full of over-conservative people. Just which cultivator brought up such a junior?'

A Lan smirked, answering the on-screen Yiling Patriarch's question, "Hanguang-Jun."

"Lan Wangji."

"Wangji."

"Hanguang-Jun."

"Lan-Er-Gege!"

The room was rendered silent, although all *immediately* knew just *who exactly* out of them all said that.

'Lan-er-gege?! How can someone be so shameless?!"

Wei Wuxian stretched his arms, walking away. "Oh well.. The new ones will always surpass the old, won't they? It's time to go back~"

Lan Jingyi muttered under his breath, "Lan-er-gege? Then does that mean Zewu-Jun is *Lan-dage*[1]? Oh, what about Lan Qiren? *Shanyang-dage*?[2]"

Lan Sizhui's face was impossibly red as he once again exclaimed, "Jingyi-!!"

[1] Er-ge means second brother, whereas dage can be translated to ‘eldest brother’.

[2] Shanyang (if google is correct) means goat. So he just called him ‘eldest brother goat’ or ‘big brother goat’

Next Chapter: Hanguang-Jun's arrival!!

Old Acquaintance I - The Present

Chapter Notes

Revised 01/01/23

Wei Wuxian stretched his arms, walking away. "Oh well.. The new ones will always surpass the old, won't they? It's time to go back~"

Lan Jingyi muttered under his breath, "Lan-er-gege? Then does that mean Zewu-Jun is *Lan-dage*? Oh, what about Lan Qiren? *Shanyang-dage*?"

Lan Sizhui's face was impossibly red as he once again exclaimed, "*Jingyi-!!*"

Lan Wangji glanced to Wei Wuxian, who was watching the two Lans' interaction with a fondness not known to many; his eyes crinkled at the edges and his teeth were brought together in a wide smile that made Lan Wangji's breath hitch.

"Beautiful," Lan Wangji murmured, raising a hand to tenderly cup Wei Wuxian's cheek.

"Lan Zhan," whispered Wei Wuxian in response. "They're growing up so fast..."

In all his misery, sitting in one corner of the room, a certain Jiang Sect Leader could be seen gagging. Beside him, Jiang Yanli hid a giggle behind her hand.

Speechless, Jin Zixuan pointed at the pair, his head snapping to his wife in search of an explanation. "A-Li, this- They- *Wei Wuxian*!"

"A-Xian really is a harbinger of positivity, isn't he?" said Jiang Yanli fondly. "I'm so glad he found someone like Young Master Lan."

"A-Li," Jin Zixuan whispered sharply. "*Wei Wuxian! Lan Wangji!*"

"Yes, A-Xuan, they're partners, like you and I."

"*But...*" Jin Zixuan murmured. "Weren't they at each other's throats, like, days ago?"

"*Years ago, A-Xuan,*" Jiang Yanli corrected. "And no, they just... well, let's say it was a lover's quarrel, hm?"

In the meantime, Lan Qiren had blood dripping down his chin in a small trail of red, which was hurriedly wiped away with a handkerchief by Lan Xichen.

Wei Wuxian was awoken by the sound of a barrage of footsteps approaching, sounding like something akin to the march of an army. He rubbed his eyes groggily, a frown pulling at his lips. 'What happened? Did something go wrong with the boys' flag formation?'

"To think Senior Wei thinks of us first and foremost..." said Lan Jingyi appreciatively.
"That's so sweet."

The Juniors nodded in unison.

"How could I not?" Wei Wuxian answered flatly, as if such a course of action shouldn't be questioned. "You're all my little Juniors; to *not* be worried would be very thoughtless of me as your senior! Besides...without me, who knows what mischief you'd get up to?"

Lan Wangji looked unconvinced.

"Is he referring to me?" Lan Jingyi pointed to himself—he was speaking to Sizhui. "Am I so irresponsible?" The words were bitter, although he was smiling mischievously.

The door was suddenly forced open, revealing a horde of many servants who were crowding the entrance, lit torches in their hands.

Still partially dazed, Wei Wuxian allowed himself to be pulled away by two servants who held him up by the arms. 'The things I made need to be used carefully, or else disasters can happen. But nothing was wrong with the flags that the boy drew. Just what in the world..?'

"It's obviously your doing, you crude fiend!" Sect Leader Yao's lips curled into a sneer. "Why are you feigning ignorance?!"

"Are you an idiot or just *unable* to speak *well* of him?"

"Exactly! Besides, those are his thoughts right there—why would one lie to oneself?"

"Right! Right! We didn't even see him leave the room!"

In the east courtyard, the Lan cultivators were gathered in one room along with Madam Mo, Mister Mo, and multiple servants who stood at the side silently. A corpse was motionless on the floor, wrapped in a thin white blanket. Two Lan disciples were kneeling beside it, inspecting the body.

As he entered the scene, Wei Wuxian had a doubletake in surprise, 'There are so many people!'

Sizhui rolled up his sleeve, holding it still with his other hand as he reached to touch the corpse. "...Less than thirty minutes have passed since the corpse was discovered?"

Wen Ruohan rested his cheek in a palm and smirked in interest, "Oh?... A corpse?"

"Don't you go getting any ideas," said Wen Qing, chidingly poking him in the side. "An army of corpses is *Wei Wuxian's style*, not yours."

"A shame," Wen Ruohan murmured. "Hey, Qing-er, do you think we'll get to witness Wei Wuxian in his prime? Because from what I've heard, it sounds very *interesting*..."

Wen Ning sheepishly smiled, "S-Sect leader W-Wen.. I-I am glad t-to h- hear you're e-enjoying th- this."

A young Jiang cultivator furrowed their eyebrows in confusion, "I didn't know fierce corpses could stutter!"

"After we suppressed the walking corpses, we found the corpse in the hallway when we were on our way to the East Courtyard from the West Courtyard," Lan Jingyi replied dutifully. He pulled down the blanket, revealing the distorted face of Mo Ziyuan's corpse.

"It's that brat from before! What happened?"

"Was he murdered?"

A sarcastic remark, "No, he's sleeping."

"Serves him right for being so arrogant!"

Wei Wuxian gasped, his eyes wide and unblinking, "Don't tell me that the corpse-" He froze, suddenly cognisant of Madam Mo, who was watching him with waves of murderous intent.

"Oh dear..." Jingyi murmured, "I know where this is going.."

Wei Wuxian shook the cautious thoughts away and instead reached out to touch the corpse.

The tense silence was interrupted by Lan Sizhui's cry of "Careful!"

Madam Mo had pulled out a dagger from her pocket and was thrusting it in the demonic cultivator's direction, her face an enraged red. Sizhui swiftly grabbed her

wrist, tackling the weapon out of her dangerous hands.

"What an impulsive woman," said Jiang Cheng disgruntledly. "With a clan of the best cultivators of the generation in the room with them, did she really think she would be able to murder someone in their presence?"

"Er," said Jingyi. "Can we just talk about how Senior Wei just almost got hurt? *Not* about how stupid that woman is?—which, by the way, I *totally* agree with."

"I was sure my heart stopped just now..."

"You know, I feel somewhat sorry for Wei Wuxian," said a woman. "Even in his second life, he cannot escape death...or attempts on his life."

"L-Lan Zhan," said a weak cry across the room. "You're squeezing me a bit tight."

"Wei Ying...I- sorry."

Wei Wuxian leaned against the wall, clutching his chest with evident relief. "Whew. Close call... close call.."

Madam Mo, who was attempting to attack him once again, was being restrained by Lan Sizhui by the arms. "My child died such a tragic death! I have to avenge him! Why are you standing in my way?!"

Wei Wuxian crouched down, his voice both calm and unafraid. "What does your son's tragic death have anything to do with me?"

"Exactly!"

"How is it his fault?!"

"Although I hate to say it, the Yiling Patriarch really did nothing this time."

Lan Sizhui stepped in front of the crazed woman and held both of his hands up in a placating attempt to calm her down, "Madam Mo, seeing from your son's condition, how his flesh and essence has been drawn out of him, he was clearly killed by an evil being. It should not have been done by Young Master Mo."

"*Evil being ?*" said Sect Leader Yao with a smirk, looking around the room purposely. "It's obvious what that is entailing."

"Shut up!" The juniors said at once.

Madam Mo ground her teeth furiously, "How do you know?! The lunatic's dad was a cultivator as well! He must have also learnt the dark arts!"

Madam Jin's eyes widened.

A cultivator's son? Mo Xuanyu? So that's why the boy was familiar. He was that child who came to the tower many years ago... What a joke.

Her hands clenched into fists on the fabric of her robes. *'How can someone subject their own child to such torment and not care?!"*

Yes, she'd sent all of the illegitimate children away; yes, she hadn't acknowledged a single child other than Zixuan, but her husband had always assured her he'd supported those families, and she had naïvely trusted his word.

How many children have suffered because of her ignorance?

Sizhui's smile looked tight. "Uh, madam, there is indeed a lack of evidence. I suggest that-"

"The evidence is right here with my son!" Madam Mo interjected, pointing at the corpse of her son. "See for yourselves!"

Wei Wuxian crouched down next to the corpse and lifted the cover, revealing a disfigured, bloodied body that was lacking a left arm. Madam Mo was still yelling in the background, but Wei Wuxian ignored her in favour of analysing the body.

"Ziyuan's corpse has already told me who was the one that murdered him! Did you see this? You all heard what he said today, right in this hall, didn't you? What did the lunatic say? He said that if Ziyuan touched his things again, he'd chop off Ziyuan's arm!"

"So that's why A-Ling asked whether he knew the future," said Jin Zixuan understandingly, looking unsure if he should be amused or passive.

An amused chortle of laughter from Wen Ruohan resounded within the room loudly, "This woman is quite amusing! Back in Qishan, I wouldn't even have the patience to torture her! She would have been dead before she stepped foot in the dungeons."

Everyone decided that it would be best not to reply to that.

Madam Mo woefully sobbed into her sleeve, "My poor Ziyuan has never touched any of the Lunatic's things, yet he was not only framed but also killed... The lunatic is out of his mind..."

"Never touched his things?" Jin Ling scoffed, "Framed? This woman, seriously..."

"Wei Wuxian didn't even kill him!" said a girl furiously. "Besides, what was that murder attempt of yours just moments ago? Are you going to account for that, huh?"

"Well," said Sect Leader Yao. "She is a grieving mother, so it is only natural she wants to avenge her son, and for that, I can sympathise—"

"Of course, *you* can sympathise, you loathsome little fiend."

Wei Wuxian reached into the corpse's robes, revealing a black material that was hidden inside. Sizhui removed the cloth, which he now revealed to be a spirit attraction flag.
"He had it coming. How many of our spirit attraction flags are left?"

"Five," said Lan Jingyi. "When we were dealing with the walking corpses in the West Courtyard, we found that one of them was missing..."

"And you decided not to mention this because...?"

"Cut him some slack, he was a young cultivator," said Ouyang Zizhen. "Knowing him, he probably thought the wind blew it away."

An embarrassed pink dusted Jingyi's cheeks.

As usual, the servants began to gossip amongst themselves.

"Didn't they say that we mustn't go outside at night, especially to the West Courtyard?"

"I heard that It's used to attract evil beings! The cultivators are using them to lure the beings here and destroy them. Who would've known that somebody would steal such a thing?!"

"The flag looks so strange. The name is even stranger."

Wei Wuxian frowned, "It's not strange! In fact, I'm quite pleased with the design. Besides, I'd like to see *you* create a complicated array and manage to make it look like a piece of artwork at the same time!"

"Well said," agreed Wen Ruohan. "But in my eyes, it *is* a piece of artwork. In fact, I'd like to commemorate you."

"Er... why is the devil incarnate praising the Yiling Patriarch? Is this a union of darkness we never saw coming?"

"Perhaps he'd always been a thief and grew addicted to stealing his lunatic cousin's talismans!"

"Tsk tsk tsk.."

Wei Wuxian narrowed his eyes, observing the situation. *'I am the one who created the spirit attraction flags anyways.'*

He held up his left arm, watching one of the two cuts fade away. *'And so, the sacrificial contract has deemed the death of Mo Ziyuan as my own doing. What a lucky hit.'*

"Er," said Jin Zixuan. "He really isn't afraid of voicing his delight, is he?"

Jiang Yanli did not reply, save for a small smile she flashed him.

Trembling in rage, Madam Mo impulsively grabbed a teacup from the side and launched it at Wei Wuxian, who skilfully dodged the attack. "If yesterday you didn't denounce him in front of so many people, would he have gone out in the middle of the night? It's all your fault, you bastard!"

She turned to Sizhui, "And you! You bunch of useless fools! You cultivate and ward off evil spirits, but you can't even protect a child! Ziyuan is still so young!"

The Lan disciples were evidently insulted by her comment, for they tensed, barely restraining their anger and frustration.

"Now," said Wei Wuxian dutifully. "Self-restraint is good, of course, but sometimes you need to *lash out* —no, perhaps not that—but at least *say something* instead of bottling up your feelings."

Lan Qiren's face was an angry red, "Wei Wuxian! What are you teaching my disciples?!"

"—Yes, Yiling Patriarch!"

"Yiling Patriarch? Call me Senior Wei!"

"Yes, Senior Wei!"

"Good!"

Lan Qiren's finger shook in the air furiously, "Whose sect are you from?! Whose rules do you follow?!"

Wei Wuxian scoffed, "Who do you think you're taking out your anger on? Do you really see them as your servants? They travelled far and wide to come here and exorcise evil spirits for you without taking a single penny, but do you think that they owe you?!"

"How old is your son? He's probably at least seventeen by now, isn't he? He's still a child? Just how young of a child is he since he doesn't understand basic human language?!"

Madam Mo was at a loss for words, "You-"

However, Wei Wuxian continued, "Did they or did they not repeatedly tell him not to approach the West Courtyard or touch anything in the formation? Your son snuck outside at night on his own. Is it my fault? Or is it his?"

Lan Xichen smiled, glancing at Wei Wuxian with a mix of guilt and fondness, "Wuxian, thank you for defending the Junior disciples."

Wei Wuxian grinned, sheepishly scratching the back of his neck, "It's no problem."

Madam Mo gripped Mister Mo's shoulder tightly, "Call everyone!" When he didn't respond, she snapped, "Call everyone inside!"

The man pushed her away with ease, throwing her into the arms of a servant. "Madam!"

"You.. You... You, get out of here as well!" roared Madam Mo.

A servant gently took hold of Mister Mo, leading him out of the room. "Master, master, let's go outside for now and get some fresh air..."

Jin Ling pulled a face, "She actually kicked out her own husband simply because he didn't follow her orders?!"

"That's women, all right," murmured Jin Guangshan, sending a glance to his wife across the room.

Wei Wuxian jolted in surprise as he glanced at his wrist which had no trace of injury, 'Another cut has disappeared? Don't tell me..'

Jin Zixuan frowned, "What? Another cut disappeared? Did something happen?"

"Someone else must have died... someone Mo Xuanyu sought revenge on."

"AHH!"

At the scream, everyone was suddenly alert, glancing at one another sharply. "It is by the door! Go outside and check!"

Laying on the floor was Mister Mo's corpse, blood pooling all around it; the servant sitting beside him looked terrified, hastily scrambling away.

Wen Ruohan narrowed his eyes, "The thing that did this carries a lot of resentment. If not handled carefully, it can be extremely dangerous."

"Well observed," said Madam Jin sarcastically.

Wei Wuxian's eyes widened in shock at the sight. At the same time, Madam Mo fainted in a servant's worried arms, "Madam!"

Sizhui roughly grabbed the shocked servant by the collar, "Did you see what it was?"

The servant immediately shook their head from side to side, trembling in fear.

Sizhui sheepishly scratched his cheek, "That was improper of me, sorry..."

"It's all right," said Lan Wangji. "You were young. And considering the situation, what you did was needed."

"Taking the lives of two people within such a short period of time, its level of brutality has got to be exceptionally high," murmured Wei Wuxian.

Sizhui asked Jingyi, "Have you sent the signal?"

Lan Jingyi nodded, "I have, but if there are no seniors in the area to assist us. It would most likely take at least an hour for our people to come here."

"An hour?!"

"What stupidity!" roared a self-righteous woman. "Letting a group of juniors deal with such a matter without seniors in the area for backup! What is the Lan Sect thinking?"

"Now, now," said Nie Huaisang, thoughtfully watching the screen. "For all they knew, this spirit they were hunting was low-level and hadn't even acted yet. Ignorance, yes; stupidity, no."

The scene switched to Lan Wangji staring into the distance, watching as the blue signal exploded into the air. He held his sword, Bichen, in one hand, and strapped to his back was his well-renowned Guqin, Wangji.

Wei Wuxian made a sound of dissatisfaction, "Even from the back, you're so handsome... how come I'm not that elegant?"

"Do not worry," Lan Wangji gently patted Wei Wuxian's hand, "I find Wei Ying very elegant. And handsome as well."

At the display, Jin Zixun's lip curled, "Damn cutsleeves. Disgusting."

Jingyi sighed, "Sizhui, what should we do now?"

Lan Sizhui's eyes shone with determination, "We will wait for reinforcement! The being is likely hidden among us. Let none of the people here leave!"

Wei Wuxian looked at the unconscious figure of Madam Mo and let out a heavy sigh.
'It'd be quite a pain if the juniors brought over the 'old acquaintance' of mine. But if I take my leave now, it's more than likely that everyone here will lose their lives.'

"What a lovely person," said Luo Qingyang with a gentle smile. "He has such a predicament, yet wishes to protect these Juniors over his own safety. Lan Wangji is a very lucky man."

The man sitting beside her grumbled quietly, "If you like him that much, then who am I to stop you?"

"Don't worry, dear," she replied teasingly. "You'll always be the one in my heart."

On the other side of the room, Wei Wuxian blinked, rapidly shaking his head. "Lan Zhan! It- It's not like I didn't want to see you or anything! I was just scared that you were gonna-"

Lan Wangji leaned forwards and tenderly kissed his forehead, "I know. Wei Ying was merely worried."

Lan Qiren sighed loudly to himself. "Cutting people out mid-sentence is forbidden. My nephew.. My poor nephew. He has been tainted."

Jingyi gently knelt down and began to tend to the servant, while Sizhui checked Madam Mo for signs of sickness or traces of dark energy.

Madam Mo remained unconscious. The servant, however, slowly began to awaken. When he finally came to, his eyes widened in shock.

"A-Tong, you're awake!" another called from the side.

He swiftly sat up, his face placid as if in a trance, which incurred a peculiar interest from Wei Wuxian.

"Possession."

"Definitely possession."

"He's dead."

"Yep, he's dead."

The servant suddenly lifted his hand and roughly grabbed his own neck, squeezing it tightly and cutting off his airways. His face shifted into a white-blue colour, and he slumped to the floor before Sizhui could reach him, "Do not move!"

"How unfortunate...there's no saving him."

"Definitely no saving him."

"He's already dead."

"Didn't we already gather that?"

Lan Sizhui sighed sadly, holding the lifeless body in his arms. "There is no use.."

Jingyi respectfully remained silent. The crowd, however, were in an uproar.

.."A ghost! There is an invisible ghost in here and it made A-Tong strangle himself!"

"That's rather dramatic."

"Have you ever seen a ghost before, lady?"

"There's no need for this useless fretting anyways."

"There really isn't a need to worry, for Hanguang-Jun will be there soon!"

Jiang Cheng turned to the four juniors, a scowl plastered on his face. "Will you all just shut up for once and take this seriously?!"

"Sorry, Clan Leader Jiang."

"Sorry, Uncle."

"Sorry, Clan Leader Jiang."

"What they said."

Lan Sizhui observed the talismans placed on the wall. "The talismans show no sign of it being a vicious ghost..." he said thoughtfully. "If they were, they would've ignited green

flames on their own instead of staying motionless as they are now."

"Sizhui, this thing just murdered a person in front of everyone's eyes," said Jingyi questioningly. "Do you have any ideas?"

"I..." Sizhui was at a loss for words, unaware of how to proceed.

Wei Wuxian folded his arms, ignoring the stressed servants yelling behind him as he observed the situation.

The being killed three people at once and with such little time in between each kill. Even a well-known cultivator will have trouble immediately coming up with a solution, let alone these juniors who have just started their careers.

The candles in the room were all blown out at once, breaking Wei Wuxian out of his trance. It brought great darkness to the once lit-up room and incurred panic from all unfortunate enough to fall prey to it.

"Stand where you are. Do not run around! It will catch whoever runs!"

"The ghost! The ghost's here again!"

"Do not worry. The lights will come on at once."

Jingyi ignited a talisman, illuminating the room with a bright light. Sizhui sent him a disarming smile of thanks. He then turned to the servants. "Is everyone alright?"

Meanwhile, Wei Wuxian stared at his wrist thoughtfully, watching as the last cut dissipated.

"Hm?" he held out both arms, "The cuts...Have all disappeared?"

Wen Qing furrowed her eyebrows, "Someone else died? Just what is this creature?"

Nie Huaisang and Nie Mingjue suddenly held the attention of a third of the people in the room. Nie Huaisang nervously laughed and opened his fan to hide his face, to his brother's confusion.

No, wait.. In the beginning, there were two cuts on each wrist.

The three that represented Mo Ziyuan, his father, and the servant A-Tong have disappeared already.

Unless..

Wei Wuxian sharply turned his gaze to Madam Mo, who was still unconscious on the floor.

She's already dead.

"I called it!" yelled a cultivator.

"No, you said she's *dying*, not already *dead*," said another smartly.

"Stop being so stingy and hand over the money."

It isn't a spirit but it can still possess people. Just what in the world is it?

A servant yelped in fright, pointing to A-Tong's lifeless body on the floor. "The hand! The hand...A-Tong's left hand!"

Wei Wuxian glanced at the corpse, his eyes lighting up in realisation, "The left hand!" He then doubled over as he clutched his stomach, laughing hysterically throughout the chaos.

Jingyi looked at him incredulously, sneering in disgust, "How can he laugh at such a time?!"

"What a psycho," agreed Sect Leader Yao.

Jingyi felt a sudden glare burn into his back from the group of Lans...he had a strange inkling that it was the Grandmaster, Lan Qiren. Therefore, he moved two steps to the right, snatched Nie Huaisang's fan after much resistance from the latter, and decidedly hid his face out of embarrassment. *'This is very useful for hiding from people's gazes. Maybe I should get myself one...'*

Suddenly regaining clarity, Wei Wuxian walked over to them, reaching out a hand in hopes of stopping the misunderstanding, "No! No!"

Lan Jingyi slapped his hand away, "What 'No'? Stop fooling around!"

Wei Wuxian crouched down beside the corpses on the floor. "This isn't Mo Ziyuan's dad, and that isn't A-Tong either."

"So much for his *psycho Mo Xuanyu* pretence...Wei Wuxian is too smart for his own good."

"Why is that?" Sizhui asked curiously.

"It's not like any of them were left-handed. At least I'd know that they'd always hit me with their right hand."

"Wow."

"Wei Wuxian."

"Shameless."

"He's right, you're really shameless."

"But the loony facade is back. Wonderful."

Jingyi scowled, "What are you so proud of? Look how smug you are!"

Sizhui stroked his chin thoughtfully. 'Why have they become left-handed the moment before they died? Then who else became left handed..?'

Jin Ling scoffed, "Uncle was hinting at something, you idiots."

"I just thought he was an idiot trying to be smart like us," said Lan Jingyi, shrugging. "I guess Senior Wei is just that good of an actor."

Lan Sizhui's face was red, "I... I realised it in the end."

Lan Sizhui gasped in realisation as he stared at Madam Mo's pale corpse. 'Something is wrong with her left hand!'

Jin Ling proudly smiled, raising his head. "See, I was right. Maybe I should have been the one to deal with this spirit, not you group of dunderheads."

Lan Jingyi sent him a matter-of-fact look, "You would have been too scared to leave Clan Leader Jiang's side, you proud peacock."

Wei Wuxian burst into laughter, "Bahaha! Proud Peacock? I had never thought of that one! Zixuan, it looks like Jingyi takes after me!"

Jin Zixuan huffed through his nose in amusement while Jiang Yanli attempted to muffle her giggle with her sleeve.

"Hold her down!" said Lan Sizhui abruptly. Before anyone could reach her, however, Madam Mo stirred. She slowly awoke, standing up on two wobbly legs and stumbling with every movement, no matter how small.

Lan Sizhui pulled out a talisman and held it in her direction. "Please excuse me!" Before he could activate it, however, Madam Mo lunged for his neck.

'Oh no!'

"No!" The crowd wailed. Some, such as a few Lans, leapt up from their seats with the urge to save the on-screen Sizhui.

Before the arm could touch him, Lan Jingyi was kicked into range by Wei Wuxian. His body covered Lan Sizhui's, acting as a shield; the hand made contact with his robes, and at once withdrew when its fingertips lit up into bright green flames.

"Thank the heavens!" sighs of relief echoed throughout the room.

Wei Wuxian swore this was pulling at his heartstrings, watching them get attacked like that again. Every time one of his Juniors were put in danger, it was like something got stuck in his throat, making him unable to breathe.

Lan Jingyi held his left shoulder, where smoke was emitting from the burned patch. He then turned to Wei Wuxian with a scowl, "Why did you kick me, you damn lunatic?! Did you want to kill me?!"

Wei Wuxian held his head with both hands and wailed, "It wasn't me!"

Sizhui suddenly gasped, catching the attention of the two who were arguing. "Jingyi, look!"

Madam Mo stood up and her left arm twitched.

This is the creature that the spirit attraction flag summoned over--A left hand that wants to die as a whole corpse!

Jin Guangyao frantically bit his nails while mumbling, "Nie Huaisang, Nie Huaisang, Nie Huaisang... I should have killed him with Da-Ge. He destroyed everything. It was *him*. It was *all him!*"

Before his voice could get louder than the fighting on the screen, he paused thoughtfully. "Su She.." he murmured. "That's right! Su She was the only loyal one I had; he *died* for me! Surely I could get him to..."

A laughter made its way through his lips. Jin Guangyao set off on his feet, searching the large room for a familiar figure.

Nobody had noticed the movement, too focused on the screen.

Lan Sizhui held back the hand using his sword—it gripped tightly on the blade, attempting to force its way past but throughout the commotion, Jingyi yelled, "Sizhui! Blades have no use on the thing!"

The hand carries with it the resentment of a deceased person. If it's unable to find its corpse..

"Everyone, take off your robes and put them over the hand!" Sizhui ordered.

It could only devour the left hand of a human and take its place.

After it consumes the flesh and energy of the body, It'll continue to search for the next vessel of possession until it finds every single part of its corpse.

A Lan disciple beamed, "This narration is really useful! I can understand everything that's happening!"

A few nodded in agreement, voicing words of praise and thanks.

Wei Wuxian frowned, "They're my thoughts! Don't call them useful!"

The Lan disciple ignored him and continued speaking, "I'm so envious. The Yiling Patriarch is so clever. I want a genius brain like that!"

"Me too!"

"Yeah!"

Wei Wuxian looked so affronted that Jiang Cheng couldn't help but snicker.

The Lan disciples began to take off their pristine white robes and threw them onto the hand. The cloth lit up in a blinding green hue as soon as it made contact, viridescent flames alight.

Rows and rows of incantations have been sewn onto the Lan Sect's uniforms. They're capable of protecting the disciples.

But when facing such a strong opponent, the uniforms will wear out just after the first use.

"Unsheathe your swords and make a fence! We will have to manage until a senior comes!"

"Yes!"

"Like father, like son..." said Lan Xichen with a smile. "Sizhui is an amazing leader, just as both Wangji and Wuxian."

"It's good we have at least one dependable disciple from the younger generation," commented Lan Qiren, slowly stroking his goatee.

Now it's getting a bit difficult. There are no materials at hand that I can use to make any tools out of. There isn't anything that I can command either...

A corpse holding both great malice and great resentment—I don't need to search at all!

Jin Guangshan sat up straight, intently watching the screen.

Wei Wuxian lightly walked over to the two bodies lying lifelessly on the floor. He yanked them up by the collar and smirked with eyes a bloody crimson.

"Wake up."

The way he said those sweet words with such an eerily frightening smile brought plenty of shivers to the viewers.

"Two words?!"

"That easily?!"

"Amazing!"

"That didn't really help to show anything..." Jin Guangshan complained, "If you're going to explain anything with this ridiculous narration, then explain your ways of demonic prowess!"

The two fierce corpses ran to the hand that was currently squeezing Madam Mo's corpse's neck. They bit and gnawed in a desperate attempt of destroying it.

"Shixiong, what is this? Fierce corpses?

"I think so... Are they fighting with the ghoul hand?"

"This is my first time seeing with my own eyes a legendary battle between fierce corpses."

"Me too!"

Many young cultivators stared at the screen with starry eyes.

"So cool!"

"Wow! I kinda want to learn how to make them do that-" The Jin who commented shrank under the many glares they received.

Ouyang Zizhen gasped, "Sizhui, Jingyi, how could you?! You never told me something so cool like this happened! I would have come!"

Jingyi smirked tauntingly, "It was a job offered to the Lans. It was so cool seeing it in first person!"

Zizhen grabbed the fan (which was Nie Huaisang's) he held and slapped him on the head with it, "Why are you looking so smug? One time Senior Wei took me out on a night hunt and I got to see so many cool things! I bet he hasn't done that for *you!* Hmph!"

Jingyi looked up, "You—" He turned to Wei Wuxian, "Senior Wei, how could you?!"

Jin Ling scowled, "Uncle, that's unfair! You said that you couldn't take me alone because it was dangerous! What's with this favouritism?!"

Lan Jingyi crossed his arms, "Yeah!"

As the scene unfolded, Wei Wuxian looked rightfully wronged.

One of the corpses bit harshly on the hand's wrist, trying to rip off a chunk of flesh. The hand, therefore, released Madam Mo and began to fight ferociously against the two fierce corpses.

"My goodness, I feel that compared to the rumours and stories, the actual thing is... Spectacular!"

Lan Qiren trembled in fury. Nobody noticed other than Lan Xichen, who was busy muffling his laughter with a sleeve.

Wei Wuxian watched them fighting with sharp eyes. '*Even three recently deceased fierce corpses fighting together can't suppress this one arm!*'

'If I interfere any further, it'd be hard to guarantee nobody figures out that it's me.'

Sect Leader Yao smirked, "He may try to act like a hero and save them, but in the end, he finds his life worth more than theirs."

The hand grabbed Madam Mo's neck and immediately snapped it.

Wei Wuxian blinked. "..."

The viewers did the same motion. "..."

'Oh well..' Feeling resigned and preparing to reveal his identity, he brought two fingers to his mouth, preparing to whistle but the sound of a guqin interrupted his actions.

Wei Wuxian beamed, excitedly tugging on his husband's arm. "Lan-Er-Gege! Lan Zhan! It's you! Look, it's you!!"

Lan Wangji smiled, "Mn."

A Clan leader gasped in astonishment, "You- You were willing to risk getting your identity discovered just so you could save them?!"

A few others looked at the demonic cultivator with mixed emotions.

Perhaps, just maybe he wasn't that bad after all.

Wei Wuxian froze, 'It's him?!"

"If you think about it, had Hanguang-Jun not arrived then, we would have known it was Senior Wei," said Lan Jingyi.

"You right...I wonder how that would have played out."

The Juniors beamed, hurriedly running towards the figure, "Hanguang-Jun!"

Golden eyes that rivalled the sun pierced the cold air as long elegant fingers danced on the guqin. Lan Wangji strummed a loud tune on the instrument, immediately destroying all three fierce corpses.

Wei Ying dramatically held a hand to his head and pretended to fall, fainting into Lan Wangji's arms. Lan Wangji caught him and wrapped his arms around his waist.

Wei Wuxian opened his eyes and stared at the on-screen Lan Wangji. He squealed in delight when he saw the gold irises and began to passionately compliment his husband.

"Such a prince charming!"

"Lan Zhan! Too handsome!"

"Just a strum and all of them are defeated!"

"So cool!!"

Everyone turned to him with a deadpan look that screamed, '*We all think the same, but please shut up, for the sake of everyone.*'

Sizhui glanced behind him, intending to speak with Wei Wuxian, but startled at the sudden disappearance and lack of person. "Where did he go?"

Wei Wuxian was hiding behind a pillar. He could feel his heart pounding in his chest in fear.

"Fear?" said one Lan disciple.

"Why?"

"Oh, he's quite dense isn't he," said another intelligently.

"He is."

"When your heart pounds like that, it's *love*!" The Nie disciple who commented dramatically clutched his chest, blinking back tears.

'How unfortunate I am that the one who came just happened to be from the Lan Clan. But even more unfortunately, he's Lan Wangji!'

"Wow. Too dense, I say."

"He's worse than my husband."

'I've gotta find myself a mount and get away from here as soon as possible!'

Wei Wuxian arrived at a shed and locked eyes with the animal inhabiting it—a large donkey who was sniffing haughtily in his direction.

Jingyi beamed, "It's Lil'Apple! So that's where you found it!"

Wei Wuxian clapped his hands together excitedly, "I choose you!"

The screen faded into black, incurring confusion within the room.

Jin Guangshan grinned, "Well, Wei Wuxian is an excellent thinker. I used to only value him because of his demonic prowess. However...he would be a great asset to the Jin Clan."

Her temper at its peak, Madam Jin threw her hands in the air and decided that she's had enough. She held out a hand and slapped him on the face, leaving a bright red mark of her fingerprints. "He's already a married man! What were you thinking, speaking of him in such a way, you little rat?!"

Jin Guangshan hissed, clutching his cheek defensively, "Woman, you best watch your tongue!"

Madam Jin scoffed, "And you best cling onto that petty life of yours because I'm opting to end it right here and now!"

Wen Ruohan, amused, leant against the wall and whistled.

"That is my brother you were speaking of," said Jiang Yanli, suddenly appearing behind Madam Jin. "He is a happily married man, with the most delightful child you could only *dream* of having! I am ashamed to have *you* as a father-in-law."

"You—" Jin Guangshan roared. "All of you women are psychos! Psychos, I say! This is why *men* are the ones fit to rule, with *you* continuing the line for us! I should have never allowed you to marry Zixuan! He deserves someone who knows how to *respect!*"

Things got quite chaotic shortly following that, especially the state of a certain someone's face. (Well, let's just say that Jin Guangshan won't be making more crude comments any time soon.)

Dafan Mountain I - The Present

Chapter Notes

Revised 14/01/23

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Wei Wuxian could confidently say that the room had now been split into three masses: those sneering at himself, Jiang Yanli and a few unnamed others; those in approval of his shijie's actions, nodding relentlessly and even applauding her; and, lastly, those who were simply indifferent to the matter, sprouting more and more gossip of different origins to their friends.

And him, well, he likes to think that he'd be in the second category. Lan Wangji felt inclined to agree.

Jin Zixuan, however, was pale as a sheet, his face glistening with sweat. He offered a trembling hand to Jiang Yanli, silently, and led her back to their area.

Jin Ling, however, watched her confidently walk in no small amount of amazement, "A-Niang, you're so cool! I want to be like you when I'm older!"

"*No, please don't!*" the people surrounding could only think helplessly.

Jin Guangyao nervously gnawed on his fingernails, pacing silently as he plotted meticulously, '*Minshan—he isn't here, I've looked all around...But where could he be? Neither are the Wen Dogs that Wei Wuxian oh-so heroically saved. The doctor Wen Qing was resurrected so you'd expect the rest of the group to come as well, however...*'

He glanced up instantly, an epiphany striking him suddenly. The tip of his fingernail split. 'Unless...' . . .

Curiously, Lan Sizhui made his way to the group of disciples that surrounded Jingyi, who was once again fiddling with the mysterious platform.

"I don't trust you with that thing," said one bluntly. "Who knows what you'll make happen now? Step away!"

"What does it say?" another questioned.

"What is that thing?" said a third.

"Is it an immortal?" A Jin disciple asked.

The disciple was suddenly doubling over, clutching their head, for someone had chidingly slapped it with no amount of gentleness. "You idiot, immortals can speak! This is a magical box created by the immortals for us cultivators to use!"

"Ah, I see. How smart, shixiong!"

Once Sizhui had finally pushed past the fray, he asked, "Jingyi, what are you doing?"

The person in question didn't turn around, keeping his focus deeply on the platform. "It's that weird name thing again. This time it says stuff like '*Remnants*', '*Yi quartet*'—what's that say? '*Moling Founder*'.. .and much more. What do you think it means?"

Lan Sizhui sighed exasperatedly, "I don't know. Let's not touch anything without A-Die or Xian-ge's permission."

Pink dusted Lan Jingyi's cheeks as he meekly lowered his head, "M'Kay."

Jin Guangyao's eyes widened, staring obsessively at the words displayed on the platform. '*Moling Founder*... So it's him.'

Lan Jingyi turned to Wei Wuxian curiously, "Senior Wei, which one should we choose? It looks like nothing will happen if we just leave it..."

Wei Wuxian glanced to Lan Wangji, "Lan Zhan, which one should he choose?"

"..."

Wei Ying then smiled brightly, "Lan Zhan said to do what you want!"

"*How does he know that?*" Jin Ling murmured. "Hanguang-Jun didn't even say anything.."

Lan Jingyi beamed gratefully, "Thanks!"

He attempted to place his finger on the section labelled *Yi Quartet*, but in a jolt, he was shoved by an enthusiastic member of the crowd and his hand slid down the screen.

Anxious for the outcome, Jingyi sighed helplessly and glanced to the left where the dead *should* have resurrected.

Except no one was there.

He frowned curiously, "Maybe it just happens the first time..."

...

As soon as Jin Guangyao spotted Su She amongst the masses, he grabbed his sleeve and hauled him away fiercely, worried about exposing their whereabouts.

Jin Guangyao offered a bright yellow Jin robe, as well as a patterned bronze mask. "Minshan."

Su She accepted the items, already knowing that his own clan's robes would be too distinguishable amongst the mass of yellows and purples. "Clan Leader! Where...are we? Didn't I—" he gasped. "Clan Leader, your *arm* -"

"It is all right, Minshan. I am fine," Jin Guangyao held a finger to his lips in an attempt to quieten Su She. "We need to be quiet. There's no doubt that the moment they find out you're here, they'll be after your head. And, as for me...well, they've already expressed just how *welcome* I am."

"Yes, Clan Leader!" said Su She, not once questioning the command.

Jin Guangyao smiled fondly, holding out a hand to gently caress the white fabric of Su She's shoulder. "Change into those robes and that mask. It will help to disguise you."

"What will we do then?" Su She glanced around, pointedly staring at the stars of the show, seated in the very middle of the room. "Everyone will be trying to kill us..."

Jin Guangyao bitterly smiled, "After we escape this place, let's run away... But before that, I need to do something. I no longer have nowhere to go, nowhere I belong. Er-Ge despises me...It was foolish to think he would always be by my side."

"Understood. I will do everything in my power to help you, Clan Leader."

"Thank you, Minshan."

Su She pursed his lips, small tears forming in the corner of his eyes. "Clan Leader, I'm so happy... You're alive..."

Jin Guangyao smiled, "I am also very happy, Minshan."

On the screen, large text appeared. [Episode Two (第一集)]

At the edge of their seats, everyone waited anxiously for the next scene to arrive.

Wei Wuxian is shown standing beside a well while holding a donkey's reins. A crowd of rogue cultivators surrounded him, murmuring things to one another.

"My lord, let's get going after you finish these straws, alright?" he offered up dried straw to the donkey but it huffed, and then arrogantly turned away.

Jiang Cheng snorted, "My Lord? What's next? *Shizun* ?"

Many exchanged snickers.

A girl giggled, "The Yiling Patriarch is quite amusing."

Another covered their mouth with one sleeve, "I agree. It's a shame he wasn't born in our generation. Many girls would have flocked to him like moths to a flame."

In a fit of impatience, he pulled the reins hard, causing the donkey to huff in anger. "How am I supposed to find fresh, dewy grass here? If you'll just follow your humble servant to Buddha mountain, he'll let you eat all that you want!"

"Humble servant?!"

"Who is this man? The last time I checked, the Yiling Patriarch had pride and arrogance rivalling Wen Ruohan himself!"

"Hey, that wasn't a very nice comment..."

While Wei Wuxian fought with the donkey, the rogue cultivators who were grouped together beside him began to speak, "Why is the pointer still not moving yet, now that we're at the mountain already?"

Wei Wuxian suddenly paused, watching the group curiously. '*Rogue cultivators here to night hunt?*'

Another spoke, "Maybe your compass is broken? The mountain is less than ten miles away. We need to be on our way as soon as possible."

Wei Wuxian crouched down and sighed into his hand, '*I wonder if I'll be able to get a good ghoul to be my soldier over at Buddha mountain?*'

Sect Leader Yao raised an eyebrow, pointing towards the screen aggressively, "See! As soon as he came back, he was planning on making an army to destroy the cultivation world! Truly a villain!"

"Exactly! I even heard he summoned *Wen Ning* on this specific night hunt! Of course, the fierce corpse is subdued now, but back then, it was a feral beast, I tell you!"

"What's the use of power if you can't even control your weapon?" another scoffed.

"I couldn't have said it better!" said a third party. "Who knows, Wei Wuxian may be in good spirits lately, but who's to say that he won't suddenly turn on us all and slaughter everyone here?!"

A young girl suddenly appeared from behind a tree and smiled at Wei Wuxian while handing him an apple. "Here you go!"

The moment the donkey saw the apple, its eyes lit up and it hungrily pounced.

Wei Wuxian snatched the apple away before the donkey could even take a minuscule bite, "What are you doing? This is for me!"

The donkey pouted, its pitiful, teary eyes watching Wei Wuxian somberly.

Wei Wuxian stared in surprise. "Huh?"

"Cute!"

"Oh my god!"

"So adorable!"

Lan Jingyi looked at the bewitched teenagers in awe, "Adorable? Cute? Are you blind? That thing is a nuisance, an evil creature, a demon in donkey's skin!"

However, his attempt to reason with them had undoubtedly failed.

"Shut up!" They all reprimanded.

"Hey, I'll have you know that this *thing* bit my arm *eight* times! I had to get more outfits tailored! It was an absolute nightmare!"

Suddenly, Wei Wuxian's eyes carried an evil glint in them, making the donkey pale, sensing a foreboding feeling of dread...

Jiang Cheng clasped his hands together, somehow feeling sorry for the animal, "I know that look. Whatever he's planning, this donkey definitely isn't going to like it."

A while later, Wei Wuxian was grinning while he straddled the donkey. He held an apple up by a stick and the donkey tried to reach it but to no avail. "Lil' Apple! Let's go!!"

"...Little apple?" a young female cultivator questioned.

Nobody replied.

After a small while of travelling, Wei Wuxian finally arrived at the Town of Buddha's Feet.

Rogue cultivators huddled in a group beside him; the one holding a compass frowned, "None of the compasses of evil are showing anything. I don't think that there are any soul-consuming beasts or spirits in the area at all."

"Even if the compasses aren't showing anything, it doesn't mean that nothing is in the area. They're only capable of showing the overall direction, anyways. It's not specific enough, so we can't rely on it."

Another sighed, "Don't you remember who was the one that invented the compass of evil? I've never heard of anything that can interfere with the accuracy of its pointer."

"Of course I know that it was invented by Wei Ying. But it's not as if all of his inventions are infallible. Are you saying that we aren't even allowed to doubt?"

Wei Wuxian frowned, "I never mentioned this before, but why does everyone call me by birth name? It's too intimate—I prefer the evil, scary, ferocious Yiling Patriarch!"

Jiang Wanyin merely raised an eyebrow, glancing between him and Lan Wangji.

"I never said that you aren't allowed to doubt. I didn't say that his inventions are infallible either. Why would you accuse me so, good sir?"

Thus an inevitable argument had begun, much to Wei Wuxian's confusion. "Hnn?"

In the middle of the crowd stood a girl who was blankly staring forwards. He silently followed her gaze, 'Buddha Mountain?'

Without prior notice, the girl began openly dancing under people's watchful gazes. Wei Wuxian smiled at the delightful display, "Wow!"

"A-Yan!" A woman yelled, rudely pushing past the crowd and hugging the girl from behind. "A-Yan! Let's go back!"

But the girl shoved the woman to the floor and continued to dance. "Hee... Hee..."

Jingyi stared, "Is she crazy?"

Ouyang Zizhen slapped him on the back of the head with Nie Huaisang's fan, "You idiot! You can't just say that about a girl!"

"Well, what am I supposed to say? *You're perfectly sane?* No, that wouldn't be the truth! Isn't it more unfair to lie to her? "

Meanwhile, Nie Huaisang sulked, grumbling about the loss of his fan.

Nie Mingjue sighed humourlessly, "Huaisang... After this, I can buy you a new one to paint—"

"My Bao Bao is special!" said Nie Huaisang in a blubbering voice. "It was crafted by a master all the way at the other side of the world using only rare materials that many presently sought after!"

"I can always find you a better one—"

"Da-Ge! You don't get it!" He huffed and, out of anger, stormed over to Ouyang Zizhen and grabbed the hand which held onto his fan.

Zizhen gasped as he struggled out of the hold, "Where did Sect Leader Nie get this sudden strength from?! It's that of the Lans!"

"*My fan*," said Nie Huaisang calmly.

The next second, Zizhen was kneeling with his hands raised, presenting the fan like a treasure. "Master. Please accept this one's apology." If you looked close enough, you could see him madly trembling.

The other juniors simply stared, backing away. '*Scary! Note to self: Never anger Nie Huaisang!*' Wei Wuxian felt inclined to agree.

A villager stood beside Wei Wuxian and sighed, "How awful. The girl from Blacksmith Zheng's household ran out again. Her husband, A-Yan and A-Yan's husband—None of them are well. What a poor mother she is."

Wei Ying tilted his head to the side curiously, "Mister, could you please tell me what happened to the girl?"

"What? You here to catch those creatures as well?"

"No, No, I... I'm a storyteller! In search for folk tales!"

"Huh? Do all storytellers look so funny?"

"Ha, so somebody finally decided to tell him how hideous he looked."

Wei Wuxian frowned, "Hideous? I- I did my best! I think it looks great! At least, better than what you could do!" He suddenly turned to Lan Wangji, "Lan Zhan, It looks good right?"

Lan Wangji coughed into a hand, "..Yes."

"How biassed! He's just saying that because he is your husband!" Another yelled.

Wei Wuxian huffed, shamelessly boasting, "My Lan Zhan has actual taste unlike you idiots."

"Idiots?"

"You-"

The villager sighed, "On our Buddha Mountain here, there's an old Burial Ground. A few months back, there was a dark and stormy night. When the next day came, people found that a few coffins had been brought to the surface."

-Along with the corpses inside them, they were burnt coal-black by the lightning. The townspeople of Buddha's feet were more anxious than ever."

-After a few rounds of prayers, they restored the Burial Ground and thought that everything was over. Who would have thought that the people of Buddha's feet started to lose their souls ever since then."

Wei Ying frowned, "Lose their souls?"

"So will we get to see the dancing fairy statue?!" A young Lan excitedly blurted.

"Yeah!"

"My friend was there and they said it was super cool!"

"Yes, yes, I've heard about that also!"

"The first was a sluggard, a poor wretch, loafing about and doing nothing. On the night of the landslide, he happened to be stuck in the mountain. He was lucky enough to come back safely."

-The strange thing, though, was that just a few days after he came back, he suddenly got himself a bride. He arranged their marriage with great fanfare, telling people that he was going to settle down and start doing good deeds."

-On their wedding night, he got himself as drunk as he could. After he collapsed onto the bed, he never got up again. He was all ice-cold and dreary-eyed."

-After lying there for a couple of days or so, eating and drinking nothing, he finally entered the ground. The poor bride had widowed just after she married."

-The second was A-Yan, the girl from Blacksmith Zheng's. Her future husband was killed by wolves when he was hunting on the mountain. After she knew of this, the exact same thing happened."

-Hard to believe that, afterwards, her soul-loss has been cured all on its own. But she herself had gone crazy as well, always dancing for others to watch."

-The third was A-Yan's father, Blacksmith Zheng. ..Until now, there have been seven consecutive victims."

"Thank you for the backstory," said Ouyang Zizhen idly.

"I never knew there was such a story related to the Goddess Statue!" Jingyi exclaimed. "This is very exciting!"

Wei Wuxian continued to travel on the back of Little Apple, arriving at village after village and piecing together the veiled puzzle. 'The creature devoured seven souls at a

time. No wonder so many sects gathered here. And it sounds like a high-level soul-summoning spirit!"

The rogue cultivators were still huddled together in a group, but this time, Wei Wuxian spotted them in the middle of a forest, "Seeing from how the prey is no small matter, it's only natural that the compass goes a bit awry."

Wei Wuxian casually went over to them, causing them to emit loud, high-pitched shrieks.

"Oh my!"

"What's that?!"

A sigh. "What do you want? It's the middle of the night, and you look like a hanged ghost!"

"We got nothing except for a bad scare—How unlucky!"

"A hanged ghost?!"

"Ahaha, that's one I'd never thought of!"

Throughout this humour and excitement, Wei Wuxian was pouting.

Wei Wuxian sent them a deadpan look, *'Maybe they're frustrated because of how difficult the prey is? That's exactly what I'd hoped for!'*

He took Little Apple's reins and walked away from the group, resulting in him missing the remains of their conversation:

"Did the leader of such a big sect really need to fight over a soul-summoning spirit with us?"

"What can we do? No matter which sect you choose to offend, you shouldn't offend the Jiang sect. No matter which person you choose to offend, you shouldn't offend Jiang Cheng. The only thing we can do is feel sorry for ourselves, eh?"

Jiang Cheng scoffed, "You're such an idiot to miss that conversation. I was wondering why you willingly went there even though everyone knew I was coming."

Jingyi pursed his lips, "Senior Wei, you can be a bit of an idiot sometimes."

Wei Wuxian dramatically clutched his chest and sent him a pained look, "How... How could you say that to me?!"

After a while of aimlessly strolling around the forest, Wei Wuxian suddenly heard overlapping cries for help.

"Somebody!"

"Help!"

Unnoticeably to many, Jin Ling paled.

Wei Wuxian frowned. It was most likely the trickery of evil creatures. He was in a desolate mountain, after all. After much thought, he smiled and went forwards.

'The eviler the better!'

Sect Leader Yao scoffed, "You see! He wants to build an army!"

A young woman snapped, "Shut up! You're getting really annoying now!"

Sect Leader Yao curled into himself in embarrassment.

However, what he found was contrary to his expectations. The four rogue cultivators from before were hung up on the trees by deity-binding nets.

"Huh... It's you."

"We called over a lunatic.."

Wei Wuxian heard a rustling in the bushes behind him so he swiftly spun around. A boy wearing bright yellow clothing with a peony embroidered in the chest area jumped out. He had a vermillion mark on his forehead and held a bow in hand. "I find you idiots every time!"

Jingyi glanced between the screen and Jin Ling with excitement, "Jin Ling! It's you!"

"I know, I'm not blind..." Jin Ling grumbled in response.

Wei Wuxian whistled, "A young master of the LanlingJin sect—Wealthy!"

"Wow," said Jin Ling sarcastically. "I'm *there*, a member of the great Jin Clan, and your first thought is *wealthy*?! Why am I even surprised at this point?"

The boy scowled, "There are around four hundred deity-binding nets in the mountain, and you guys have already broken more than ten of them!"

'Four hundred?!" Wei Ying gasped, 'Super wealthy!'

"..."

"Yeah, no... I have no words."

Chapter End Notes

Jin Ling: *Appears*

Wei Wuxian: Wealthy!

Next chapter: Lan Zhan's official appearance!!

Dafan Mountain II - The Present

Chapter Notes

Revised 07/05/23

Had a brief spark of inspiration which led me to spending about 3+ hours rewriting this, haha! I altered the Jiang Trio's interactions and hope I brought the characters the justice they deserve! Thank you for reading! :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The boy scowled. "There are around four hundred deity-binding nets in the mountain, and you guys have already broken more than ten of them!"

'Four hundred?!!' Wei Ying gasped, 'Super wealthy!'

"..."

"Yeah, no... I have no words."

"Young Master, please do us a favour and let us down," pleaded one of the rogue cultivators.

Jin Ling crossed his arms, furiously exhaling a large breath. "You should just stay here in case you get in my way again! I'll let you down after I catch the spirit-consuming beast, that is, if I still remember."

"A-Ling," Jiang Yanli chided, gently prodding her son on the cheek. "Mind your manners."

"Well, it's not my fault they got in my way..." After a scolding look from both his mother and father, Jin Ling slumped into himself and acquiesced. "Sorry, A-Niang.."

"Don't say sorry to me, you need to just mind your words in the future."

"...Okay."

Wei Ying pursed his lips, 'It seems that the cultivators from earlier didn't retreat because the prey was difficult, but because this sect was one to be careful about.'

The rogue cultivators' pleas got quieter, "If we stay in the mountain for the whole night, we'd only be able to wait as our souls are sucked dry..."

The donkey was undeniably moved by their pitiful situation and began to tear up. It angrily charged towards Jin Ling, only to be held back by Wei Wuxian, who was tugging on the reins in an attempt to cease its sudden rampage.

"Now isn't that just the sweetest thing?" said a young cultivator. "Oh, I wish it was *mine*, that way it would beat up all of those men lining up to get my name."

"What arrogance," said the girl seated beside her. "I think *I* would have more use for it. Besides, you'd just scare it off."

"What did you just say?!"

"*Why?*" said Jingyi solemnly into the air. "Just... *Why* would you fight over that demon? Please enlighten me."

The donkey easily threw him aside, but instead of allowing himself refuge, Wei Wuxian persistently continued to pull on the reins. "Come back! Stop, stop, stop!"

Hearing the commotion, Jin Ling turned around, evidently irritated at being interrupted, but his lips pursed in surprise as he noticed Wei Wuxian. Then his face contorted in disgust. "So it's you!"

Lan Jingyi doubled over in laughter, clutching his stomach tightly as he attempted to reign in his giggles. "Hahaha! The immediate change, Jin Ling, did you see your face?! Hahaha!"

"Jingyi... I don't think it's a good idea to be teasing Jin Ling..." Sizhui trailed off, his face paling. Just metres away, Jin Ling's face was bright red and he seemed to be wrestling with his father, trying to get to Jingyi, his sword in hand. "Oh dear."

Wei Wuxian stared in surprise, 'So he knows Mo Xuanyu?'

"For a moment there, I thought the Young Master knew it was Wei Wuxian... but that isn't likely as he would have struck him down moments ago, knowing what he supposedly did to his parents."

"Huh, so you did lose your marbles after you were kicked out," Jin Ling scoffed, raising an eyebrow as he gave Wei Wuxian a once over. "Your face looks so.."

Wei Wuxian paused. 'Did I just hear something important?'

Jin Guangshan, the previous leader of the LanlingJin sect, enjoyed flirting around, although he feared his wife. As an awful womaniser, he had a great number of illegitimate children and died as he was 'doing the deed'.

Wei Wuxian grimaced, internally face-palming. '*Back then, during the siege in the Burial Mounds, Jin Guangshan was the greatest contributor aside from Jiang Cheng. And now I'm possessing his son's body.*'

The viewers were flabbergasted.

From that small piece of information, the Yiling Patriarch was able to tell the origin of Mo Xuanyu? In his youth, Wei Wuxian was known to be intelligent, but this was simply *extraordinary!*

From another section of the room, a certain Jiang Sect Leader was wringing his hands together guiltily at an innocent yet piercing comment.

Jin Ling huffed in impatience as he put his hands to his hips. "Why are you just standing there? It's time for you to get lost! Just looking at you makes me want to throw up, you damn lunatic."

"A-Ling," said Jin Zixuan calmly. "From what I've seen, you have matured and become a much better person, but please be more considerate in the future." Upon seeing the downcast face of his son, he quickly rectified. "I'm not disappointed in you, no — I was just the same at that age — in fact, it brings me great pride to see how much you've grown... If only I was there to see it happen."

"A-Xuan," Jiang Yanli said softly, placing a gentle hand on her husband's arm. They shared no more words after that, yet to Jin Zixuan, her touch was like an anchor, keeping him in the present.

Wei Wuxian took the donkey's reins and turned around. Spitefully, as he left, he spat, "I suppose you had no mother to teach you manners."

Many outraged cultivators within the crowd bolted up from their seats at his words as if electrified.

How shameless, how arrogant, how disgusting, how repulsive, how vile Wei Wuxian was!

"OUTRAGEOUS!"

"Truly the devil's spawn!"

"To say such a thing to his sister's child!"

"Demon!"

"Monster!"

Wei Wuxian bit his lip to suppress the tremors erupting throughout his body. He had said that without thinking back then, but hearing it from a third person's perspective made him realise how awful a thing it truly was to say. He regretted it deeply, even now, and if he could go back in time, he would certainly slap himself once more.

Jin Ling squirmed where he sat, uncomfortable at the outraged exclams within the cave-like space. He was furious at the time, of course, but knowing just how *arrogant* he was showed him that he truly *did* lack manners. He no longer blamed Wei Wuxian, and forgave him long ago, but it was obvious how his Uncle still hadn't forgiven himself.

Upon seeing Wei Wuxian glancing around the room with what others thought was passiveness, Jiang Yanli saw the hurt in his eyes, saw the way his eyes glistened with guilt, saw the way her son looked at him, and she stood her ground. "A-Xian had no way of knowing. He was by no means being malicious!"

"Madam Jiang is too forgiving!"

"She is even kind to a demon!"

Meanwhile, Madam Yu and Jiang Fengmian shared mutual bewildered glances upon seeing the overreactions of the others. Was Jin Ling really such a revered cultivator? That was the only plausible explanation because after all, other than being highly disrespectful...

Why would that be an offensive thing to say to their grandson?

What Wei Wuxian failed to notice as he made to escape, however, was how the boy tightened his grip on the bow with an expression of pure fury. Not even moments later, he unsheathed his sword and pointed it at Wei Wuxian, eyes glistening with murderous intent. "What did you say?!"

Wei Wuxian frowned, 'The sword looks a bit familiar, doesn't it?'

"So... let me get this straight, Wei Wuxian," said Wen Qing. "A boy points a blade in your face, and *no*, you're not concerned about your safety or how you're going to get away — of *course* not, this is you we're talking about — but instead you're admiring his *sword*? Sorry to be blunt, but *who cares?!*"

As Jin Ling lunged in to attack, Wei Wuxian swiftly dodged the onslaught, a peculiar expression on his face. He looked as if he was taking a mere stroll, leaping over branches and roots of trees carefreely, swinging a pouch on the tip of his finger.

"The Yiling Patriarch is truly amazing," said Old Liu. "One of the accomplished cultivators of their generation couldn't hold a candle to him. Not to say they're weak or anything, but Wei Wuxian is in an entirely different body, yet still able to move so... *fluidly*."

"Notice how he isn't even attacking the kid... I expected him to strike him down at the very beginning, but..."

"Come, now, he's just playing with his food at this point! Toying with the poor kid and mocking his strength. That is cruel in its own way."

A few moments passed when Wei Wuxian decided he'd had enough. He gripped the pouch, pulled a talisman out, and slammed it onto Jin Ling's back; the boy froze, his sword falling from his grasp as he fell to his knees.

Wen Ruohan leaned closer in interest, glancing to Wen Qing for an explanation. "Care to explain?"

"It's another branch of Demonic Cultivation," said Wen Qing smartly. "Wei Wuxian doesn't use it often, but it sort of summons a ghost and they do your bidding."

Wen Ruohan's eyes twinkled in amazement, and almost... *admiration*?

"I can't get up..." Jin Ling cried, trying to push his body off the ground to no avail.

Wei Ying indifferently watched his fruitless attempts, '*Ghostlings are weak, but they sure are enough to deal with brats like this one.*'

Jin Ling stared in astonishment, "Weak? It felt like an entire mountain was on my back!"

"So that technique summons a ghost?" said Jin Zixuan curiously.

"Yeah," Wei Wuxian nodded, "I summoned a glutinous ghost. Now that I think about it, it must have been Mo Zixun. He was really heavy which is why Jin Ling had trouble getting up."

Jin Zixun seemed to tremble in pure anger, "STOP CALLING THAT FAT BASTARD BY MY NAME! I AM JIN ZIXUN!"

Wei Wuxian picked up the sword from the ground and with one slash, cut open the deity-binding nets, freeing the captives.

Jin Ling's face contorted in rage, "You damn lunatic! Let me go! Well good for you, practising such a dark art just because you didn't have enough spiritual powers to do anything! Watch out for your life! Do you know who came today?!"

"Oh! I'm so scared!" Wei Wuxian taunted with a mocking grin.

"Why are you bullying the poor kid?"

"Let him suffer in silence... I almost feel sorry for the brat."

"You know he's a Sect Leader now, right? You can't go 'round calling him names like that."

"Take this thing off right now! If you don't, I'm gonna tell my uncle! Just wait for your death!"

"Why your uncle and not your dad? Who's your uncle?"

"First he mentioned the child's mother, and now his father! What audacity!" Sect Leader Yao exclaimed, pointing an accusing finger. Many nodded in agreement, though were too spineless to speak up in fear of inciting Lan Wangji's rage.

Jiang Fengmian frowned pensively. Where was Jin Zixuan, the child's father? Did something go wrong in the future that led to the family being torn apart? After all, there must be a reason the child would threaten Wei Wuxian with his Uncle, and not his father.

"I am his uncle," said a thundering voice from within the woods.

Jiang Yanli giggled into her sleeve, "A-Cheng, that's quite the dramatic entrance."

"He's more dramatic than me," added Jin Zixuan, bathing in the chance to give Jiang Wanyin cheek.

"SAY THAT AGAIN, PEACOCK!"

Jin Zixuan calmly leaned onto his wife's shoulder, smiling innocently as if to express to everyone that he was the more mature by not responding.

Wei Wuxian froze. The fear that he felt was evident within his expression, and he was so tense that you could see the beads of sweat drop from his forehead to the forest floor.

"Do you have any last words?" Zidian crackled in Jiang Cheng's grasp, producing harsh zaps of lightning. With a swipe of his hand, the talisman that was on the young Jin's back appeared in his palm.

Jin Ling scrambled to his feet and immediately ran to Jiang Cheng's side. "Uncle!"

Jiang Wanyin grimaced as he stared at the talisman, "Haven't I told you? If you see evil practices like this one.."

Jiang Yanli froze. '*A-Cheng.. What-*'

Wei Wuxian couldn't process the rest of the sentence. Only one thought circulated his mind as he stared at the boy who was glaring at him from behind purple robes. 'He's... Jiang Cheng's nephew... He's... Shijie's child!'

"So he really didn't know..?"

"I suppose so.."

"Then... He didn't mean to offend the child. I guess he's not really at fault here, then..."

Jin Zixun was furious. Everyone's opinions on the Yiling Patriarch were shifting. He had to do something, to incite a fire and make it spread like a disease...

"Only doing one thing by mistake doesn't make him good," he said carefully. "Remember how many people he killed, how many children he orphaned, how many families he cruelly tore apart!"

Yu Ziyuan was inclined to agree with him.

"Just kill the cultivator and feed it to your dog!" Jiang Cheng continued nastily. He crumpled the talisman in his hand and it immediately burst into flames, ashes falling to the floor as he glowered at Wei Wuxian.

'Has his hatred toward me been vented on anyone who cultivates to imitate me?'

A harsh slap resonated within the room. Everyone turned only to see Jiang Yanli standing in front of Jiang Wanyin with furious tears streaming down her face.

"A-Cheng," she said, her head lowered and her entire body trembling with the force of her cries. "I understand, A-Cheng, that you may think A-Xian is at fault for everything. I understand, I do... however, what you did to those people... the *motives* you had for killing them... it was just *cruel*."

To Jiang Wanyin, all the chatter in the room receded into a small buzz and a bell-like ringing began to resound within his ears incessantly. He didn't know what hurt more.

The force of her hand, or the cruel truth to her words.

And so it was with a bitter taste in his mouth that he decided to remain silent, holding his swollen cheek with one hand.

"A-Li!" Yu Ziyuan roared, outraged at the spectacle her children were making. "How could you hit your brother? Apologise right now!"

"Apologise?" Jiang Yanli murmured. "No, mother, it is *you* who needs to apologise. *All of you*. A-Xian is my little brother, the boy I grew up with, the boy I practically *raised*." she paused. It was then that many people looked away respectfully. "So I know when he hurts. I know when he cries. I know when he has been wronged. So, *no*. Matter of fact, I think he deserves an apology right *now*."

"Shijie," said Wei Wuxian helplessly. "I'm fine. Jiang Cheng has apologised many times. There is no need to argue."

"A-Li!" exclaimed Yu Ziyuan, ignoring Jiang Fengmian's many protests. "You dare offend your mother just because of the son of a servant!"

"He is my brother," said Jiang Wanyin determinedly. Both Jiang Yanli and Wei Wuxian looked at him in surprise. "Not the son of a servant."

"You—" before Yu Ziyuan could continue, she was stopped by Jiang Fengmian, who urged her to stop making a scene. And so, it was quite embarrassingly that she sat back down, sending Wei Wuxian furious glances all the while.

Three siblings sat in equal silence.

As if snapped out of his reverie, Wei Wuxian jumped to his feet and began to flee. Before he could get far, however, Jin Ling immediately started after him.

"You can't run away! Here!" he yelled, thrusting his sword in Wei Wuxian's direction. A beam of light escaped the blade of his sword and narrowly missed him by a hair.

'What a strong sword energy!'

Too occupied by the sight behind him, Wei Wuxian's foot slipped and he fell to the floor squarely on his face. When he opened his eyes, his view was obstructed by white boots, followed by pristine white robes. He hesitantly but slowly looked up.

Gold eyes met silver.

'These mourning clothes—Lan Wangji!'

"It's Hanguang-Jun!" The juniors said in sync.

"And so the husband arrives!"

"Haha, poor Wei Wuxian! First it's his brother who's out for blood, and now his husband — sorry, I suppose he's an enemy right now — right after resurrection. He really has the worst luck, doesn't he?"

"Wait a moment — morning clothes?!" said an older woman, jolting on the spot as if struck by a phenomenon.

"...Isn't that just how Lans dress?"

"Wei Wuxian was making comments on his white robes, what of it?"

The woman dramatically drew out the silence before she whispered, "Who is he mourning for?!"

Everyone sucked in a scandalised gasp.

"He was mourning Wei Wuxian!"

"So devoted! So loving! Such *beautiful* love!"

"I know right?! If only I could find a man like that."

Wei Wuxian solemnly shook his head with faux pity, "I'm sorry to say he's one of a kind."

Lan Wangji rolled his eyes fondly, drawing Wei Wuxian into a side-ways hug.

Jiang Wanyin's lips curled into a snarl. "Hanguang-Jun, you sure live up to your reputation of '*helping wherever there is chaos* '. So what, you had time to come to such a remote mountain today?"

"Do you think he knows?" said Jingyi slowly. "About... Hanguang-Jun?"

"You know, he probably does. Talking so suggestively, he's practically *admitting* Lan Wangji is looking for Wei Wuxian!"

'What an unlucky year!' Wei Wuxian lamented. 'Enemies are running into each other! All good news to travel alone! Yet one disaster always follows the next...'

From within the crowd of Lans behind Lan Wangji, Lan Sizhui stepped forwards. "Young Master Jin, night hunts have always been fair competitions amongst the different sects. However, Young Master Jin has been setting up nets all over Buddha Mountain, significantly hindering the other sects' cultivators. Has this not violated the rules of the night hunt already?"

"Damn."

"The boy is smart, I'll give him that."

"He's actually scolding a sect leader!"

"Truly fit to be Wei Wuxian and Hanguang-Jun' child!"

Wei Wuxian smugly grinned at the praise of his son while Sizhui turned pink in embarrassment.

Jin Ling scowled. "It was their own fault for being dumb and stepping into traps. What can I do? If there's anything, wait until I catch the prey and then—" His mouth was suddenly forced shut.

The crowd burst into laughter.

"Hanguang-Jun strikes again!"

"That's certainly one way to get him to stop complaining!"

"The Silence Spell is only used in necessary situations," said Lan Qiren, who had recently awoken, as he stroked his goatee. His face was contorted in discomfort, as if he was urgently holding back something.

"It was absolutely necessary in that situation," said Lan Wangji calmly.

"..."

"Lan!" Jiang Wanyin seethed. "What do you mean by this? It's not your turn to discipline Jin Ling yet, so release it, now!"

"Sect leader Jiang, there is no need for anger. If he does not break the spell by force, it will release itself after thirty minutes."

"Sect Leader Jiang, it's a disaster!" A voice called from behind. "Sect leader, sometime ago, a blue sword flew over and destroyed all of the deity-binding nets that you had set up!"

"A blue sword.." Jiang Cheng murmured thoughtfully. And then his face contorted in anger. "LAN!"

Wei Ying sat still and stared, desperately trying to make his presence unnoticeable. 'Although that many deity-binding nets cost a whopping price, it's not too unaffordable for the YunmengJiang sect. Jiang Cheng, though, is probably dead set on getting the top prize for Jin Ling. Losing the nets is a small matter, but losing face isn't. Now here comes a good show to watch!'

Jiang Cheng stared at the screen in disbelief. "You- You were actually watching for entertainment ?!"

"What?" Wei Wuxian murmured, idly rubbing circles onto the floor. "Did you think I was there just to wait for you to finish? It really was quite entertaining though..."

"You- Can't you act disciplined for once in your life?!"

Jiang Wanyin huffed, "Hah! Seeing that Hanguang-Jun wants to punish you, how about you listen to him just this one time? It must be difficult for him as well to take care of a junior from another sect with such dedication."

Lan Sizhui stepped forward immediately. "Sect Leader Jiang, the GusuLan sect will replace and return every one of the deity-binding nets that were destroyed."

"There's no need!" Jiang Wanyin furiously turned to Jin Ling, "Why are you still standing there? Are you waiting for the prey to walk into your blade?"

Jin Ling's lips began to tremble as his uncle continued, "If you can't capture something presentable tonight, don't bother coming back."

Jin Ling froze instantly. Noticing his discomfort, Jiang Yanli gently patted him on the head, "A-Ling, he was just saying that to protect you. He only wanted the best for you, and I want you to know that."

"I know, A-Niang... It's just..." he looked down at his hands which he was wringing together.

"Please wait." Jin Ling looked up at the voice, his gaze meeting Lan Wangji's. "On Dafan Mountain dwells an unusual spirit. Please be careful."

"In Mo Village not far from here," Sizhui elaborated, "A spirit manifested tonight. In less than half an hour, it killed three people. It is ferocious. Through our carelessness, it managed to escape."

Jiang Cheng smirked, "Hoh? Something so fierce that even Second Young Master Lan couldn't stop it?"

"It has nothing to do with Hanguang-Jun!" Jingyi exclaimed defensively.

"Such a devoted junior!"

"Protecting his senior's reputation, how admirable!"

"I wish my son was like that and respected me for once." Sect leader Ouyang lamented. Ouyang Zizhen grumbled incoherently under his breath in response.

"Do not waste your breath," said Lan Wangji. He looked at Jiang Wanyin. "The spirit appears as a left arm, and prays on human flesh and blood. If you find any sign of it, alert me immediately."

Jiang Wanyin glowered at him once more before he turned away, beckoning the lilac-clad cultivators to follow in the wake.

"Dramatic entrance, dramatic exit. When isn't he dramatic?"

"Do your tasks. Do what you can, do not push yourselves," said Lan Wangji coolly.

"Yes, Hanguang-Jun!" The Lan disciples replied with a bow and immediately ran ahead.

Wei Wuxian looked at him with mixed emotions, '*Jiang Cheng and Lan Zhan really are two different people.*'

"Couldn't agree more."

Lan Wangji glanced at Wei Ying and nodded his head before he, too, left. Wei Wuxian fumbled for his bearings and hastily bowed in response, watching as the other walked further away. '*Back then he was strongly against my cultivation method. He was so desperate to catch me. Why is he so polite now?*'

"Thank you, Young Master, for your help at Mo Village," said Lan Sizhui gratefully, halting his thoughts abruptly.

"So that's what this is!"

"Why are you still standing there?" A voice reverberated from a distance. Both Lan Sizhui and Wei Wuxian turned to the source, only to find Jin Ling and Jingyi exchanging vulgar words and rude hand gestures.

Sizhui held his hand up in an attempt to placate them, "Young Master Jin.."

"I'll check this area," Jin Ling spat, gripping his sword tightly. "Don't follow me!"

Wei Ying watched him stalk off into the trees, a multitude of emotions swirling within his eyes. The wind swayed, trees rustled and the moon shone brilliantly onto the forest floor. Wei Wuxian stood amongst it all, isolated, with only nature to accompany him.

The screen suddenly switched to that of a yellow sword held in a palm. A much smaller hand, which was that of an infant's, moved up to reach for the sword and tenderly touched the hilt. Jiang Yanli cradled a newborn child in her arms, the Jin vermilion mark evident on its forehead.

"That's Maiden Jiang... and her newborn son!"

"Is it?"

"Why are we seeing this?"

"Little mistress, you looked so cute when you were a baby." Lan Jingyi teased. "Where did it all go, I wonder?"

"You!"

Beside Jiang Yanli stood a man with long, dark locks. The infant released the sword and began to giggle, which incurred a smile from the two parents. Jin Zixuan moved a hand and rested it around his wife's shoulders.

Suddenly, a sword thrust forwards, blood splattering all around. Jiang Yanli's chest area was painted in crimson, a sword protruding from her stomach. Wei Wuxian watched, horrified, as a tender hand gently cradled his face before sliding off entirely.
"A-Xian..."

"Wei Wuxian is a monster!"

Jiang Yanli lay in a pool of blood, her chest still and body motionless.

"His shijie treated him like her own brother! And he killed her so mercilessly!"

Upon noticing the absence of both of his parents, the infant wailed sorrowfully amongst the silence, isolated from the world.

"I feel so sorry for her child. He was only a month old and his parents are both gone."

Jiang Yanli covered her mouth in horror. "A-Xian.." she whispered tearfully, glancing at the man (her A-Xian was so grown up now — he used to be a whole head shorter than her — he came to her for comfort when he was feeling upset, but now he had someone else, someone who loved him in her stead) who was tenderly cradled in his husband's arms. "A-Xian, it wasn't your fault. I... I always wanted to tell you. I don't blame you, A-Xian."

"Shijie!" Wei Wuxian stammered. "Shijie I'm sorr-"

An enraged shout interjected him as quick as a strike of lightning. "WEI WUXIAN, YOU BASTARD!"

Ignoring her children's pleas to stop, Yu Ziyuan walked over to Wei Wuxian and slapped him squarely across the face.

"We raised you!" *Slap*

"We fed and clothed you!" And another.

"We gave you status, power!" And another.

"How dare you!" And another.

"That was my daughter, you murdering son of a—" before she could slap him once again, her wrist was caught in a tight hold. Now only recovering from the shock, Lan Wangji was glaring at her furiously.

"Don't touch him."

Each word he spoke was coated in venom, but Yu Ziyuan wouldn't back down. No, she stood her ground and allowed her lips to curl into a nasty sneer. "Hanguang-Jun, don't tell me he has actually got you wrapped around his dirty little finger? Wei Wuxian is just like his filthy mother, in that regard!"

"So tell me," she smirked condescendingly. "Did he blackmail you? Or perhaps tie you down with this marriage—"

Slap.

A sudden silence befell the room. Lan Wangji's arm was still raised from where he'd delivered a resounding slap across her face, causing her to stumble back in shock. He narrowed his eyes when she opened her mouth, as if daring her to speak another word about Wei Wuxian filled with ill will.

"Lan Zhan, you..." Wei Wuxian spluttered, at a loss for words. Many others, such as Lan Xichen, shared the sentiment and were unable to conjure anything to say.

"Grandmaster!" cried a junior disciple as Lan Qiren paled and doubled over. He would have fallen to his knees had Lan Xichen not caught him, and there was a small trail of red down his chin.

Because his nephew — the righteous, restrained nephew of his, Wangji — had just attacked Yu Ziyuan, Jiang Fengmian's wife.

The silence seemed to prolong almost mockingly, before a thin-faced boy murmured, "What's with all the slapping today...?"

And that, of course, was the primary catalyst for the upcoming onslaught of commentary.

"He just—he attacked—!"

"There's just *no way* that's Hanguang-Jun! What has Wei Wuxian done to him?!"

"I say he's devoted!" giggled a senior disciple to her friends. "I would *kill* for a lover like that. Slapping a former Clan Leader across the face like so..."

"My standards are through the roof now, as a matter of fact."

"How admirable!" Nie Huaisang's eyes twinkled with undisguised awe. "Hanguang-Jun, I hope to learn from you and become a great cultivator—" Having joined in the fun, he was swiftly struck on the back of the head by Nie Mingjue.

Wen Ruohan burst into a fit of laughter as he watched Yu Ziyuan retreat. "Haha! That Lan Wangji is quite interesting! I wouldn't mind having a drink or two with him!"

"Lans don't drink," said Wen Qing as matter-of-fact. "I'd wager the number of times Hanguang-Jun has touched a cup of wine can be counted on one hand."

"Hey, A-Qing..." Wen Ruohan leaned in closer as if whispering undisclosed information of the utmost secrecy. "You mentioned that, uh... that Yiling Patriarch of yours enjoys a drink or two every now and then..."

"Don't even think about it."

Wei Wuxian's lips trembled with bitter regret as he stood in the forest, the angry wind swaying his tangled hair and rustling his dark robes. His hands drew into tight fists, drawing blood where his sharp nails had pierced the skin of his palms. "How could I say that to him...?"

It was as if an unguided, private truth had been disclosed to them all, and so it was with great surprise that their hearts crumbled as quickly as a stack of falling dominos.

The look on Wei Wuxian's face, the trembling of his body, the dimness of his eyes — it all seemed to scream self-hatred, remorse and bitter regret.

The Yiling Patriarch — who was known to have slaughtered thousands without mercy, who was known to have committed the cruellest of deeds, who was known to have a heart cold as frigid ice — sounded *vulnerable*.

And for the first time, they were filled with the unbidden urge to comfort him.

"How could I...?" Wei Wuxian hissed. And without a moment's hesitation, raised a hand and struck his own face. The night was eerie, the clouds concealing any trace of moonlight that attempted to shine down onto the forest floor like a shaft of the lustrous sun. Wei Wuxian remained alone in the forest, grievous tears sliding down his face.

The room fell silent as the sound of the slap echoed off the walls. As the scene faded into darkness, it left behind a palpable sense of sadness and regret.

"Oh dear, he's *crying*!"

"Nooo ! Hanguang-Jun, why did you leave ? Wei Wuxian needs you right now!"

"This is so tragic!"

"Where's Hanguang-Jun when you need him?"

Lan Wangji hung his head in shame, '*They're right...*'

'...Where was I?'

Chapter End Notes

Anyone: Slaps

Everyone: Gasp

Next Chapter: Dancing Fairy Statue \(\geq\!\nabla\!\leq\)/

Dafan Mountain III - The Present

Chapter Notes

Revised 14/05/23

This took 6 hours to rewrite actual respect
At least its better than the first draft lmao I was cringing terribly reading that
And oh my word! It's been exactly two years today since I started this fic!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Following Wei Wuxian’s endeavours in the forest, with a slight fade into darkness, the next scene rolled along. Wei Wuxian had continued his travels throughout the forest and his journey was eventually halted by the appearance of an old man.

The old man was seated on a thick tree branch that had fallen and rotted with time, and he was murmuring to himself incoherently. As Wei Wuxian drew closer, the words became more and more vivid until he could pick out every whimper the man made.
“Ow, ow... It hurts! It hurts! Ow...”

“Where does it hurt?” he asked kindly, slightly bending down until he was at eye level with the stranger.

“Here, the head,” said the man as he pointed to his head, turning to Wei Wuxian. “My head.”

Wei Wuxian double took as he absorbed the sight: a large section of the man’s head had been cleanly destroyed, leaving only a massive hole in the wake that was leaking pools of blood profusely.

“Ah, disgusting, disgusting!” exclaimed Nie Huaisang, quickly snapping his fan open and hiding his face behind it. “A warning would have been nice!”

“I’m sure you’ve seen worse,” Lan Jingyi murmured spitefully, covering his face with the hem of his blue robes. “But, really, Senior Wei, how can you calmly look at that without even *feeling* somewhat nauseous?”

“You’re right, I think I’m gonna be sick—” The person’s words supposedly rang true, for the loud sound of retching echoed throughout the cave. Many exclams of outrage followed.

Wei Wuxian looked at the man with something akin to pity. ‘*A ghost! Seems like he was killed by a blow to the head. He’s dressed in burial robes both excellent in material and*

craftsmanship, which means that he's already been buried properly. He's not the lost soul of a living human.'

A frown crept up his face as he walked away from the scene, the man's cries now inaudible. *'But there's no way for a ghost like this to appear on Buddha Mountain..'*

Not even moments later, Wei Wuxian found himself face to face with the group of rogue cultivators from earlier.

"I swear these rogue cultivators are everywhere," said a Jiang disciple, idly leaning their face against a palm. "How many times has Wei Wuxian run into a group of them now? Three times? Four?"

"I'm sure they're just lost," said another. "The forest seems so big now that I'm watching Wei Wuxian venture around it. Just where is the exit?"

"Are the Jin sect's people still around the area?" said one of the rogue cultivators with an exhausted sigh. They were leaning against a tree with their legs bent in half and were idly picking up sticks from the ground, throwing them into tall patches of grass.
"Hopefully we don't run into them again..."

"I heard they left for the Goddess Temple with the Young Masters from the Lan Sect," said another. This one had their arms crossed to their chest and their face was contorted into an expression of deep concentration.

"Then, should we also...?"

His curiosity piqued, Wei Wuxian leapt off Lil' Apple's back and grabbed hold of the reins. He wandered over to them, lowering himself into a brief polite bow. "The Goddess Temple?"

The girl, who had been silent for a while, glanced at Wei Wuxian thoughtfully before exchanging looks with her two male companions. "It's a cave-temple on this mountain," she said, pointing to a certain place in the distance. "Over there."

"Which deity does the temple worship?" said Wei Wuxian curiously.

The girl's shoulders tensed into a shrug and she thoughtfully brought a hand to her chin. "I think it's a natural stone statue of a Goddess."

"I see," said Wei Wuxian, leaping back onto Lil' Apple and flashing the group a smile. "Thanks!"

"Don't go there no matter what! It's best that you're as far away as possible!"

"Like he'll ever listen to that," remarked Jiang Wanyin, rolling his eyes. "Wei Wuxian is always finding himself in trouble no matter where he is. It's no use trying to prevent it."

"I like to think that it's *trouble* that finds its way to *me*," said Wei Wuxian cheekily. He purposely glanced up at Lan Wangji through his eyelashes, who was exhaling a noteworthy breath as if wishing to express his opinion at the ridiculousness.

"What was that supposed to mean?" said the serious-looking cultivator, unfolding his arms as he watched Wei Wuxian rush away.

"See how he ran over even though he himself said it's dangerous."

"What madness."

"Mn," said Lan Wangji seriously. "It was dangerous, Wei Ying."

"Is Er-Gege worried about me?" giggled Wei Wuxian, smiling at the concern shining in his husband's arms. "What a gentleman."

"Of course," Lan Wangji said as if such a concept was non-refutable.

Wei Wuxian pushed Lil' Apple to his limits, trying to cross the woods as quickly as possible.

'The sluggard's marriage, the destroyed coffin, the fiancé who was killed by wolves, the successive loss of the father's and the daughter's souls, and the extravagant burial clothes...'

He narrowed his eyes. *'So that's why the compasses of evil aren't picking up anything, much less the spirit-attraction flags!'*

'All of them have underestimated the creature on Buddha Mountain! It's not at all what they think it is!'

"Er... still don't get it," said a rogue cultivator idly.

"Neither do I."

The scene switched to Lan Jingyi and Lan Sizhui, who were staring at an intricately-carved statue with no small amount of wonder. The stone figure was exceptionally beautiful — if one would disregard the prominent abnormalities, of course: it had four extra arms that looked like they belonged more to a cruel demon than a delicate lady; its leg was permanently raised as if frozen in an awkward position while dancing and its face was stretched into a perpetual smile that was more eerie than majestic.

"So this is the 'Dancing Goddess' of the local legends?" said Lan Jingyi tentatively.

"Yes," said Sizhui. "It is said to be an extraordinary stone, formed naturally. It really deserves to be called extraordinary, how a naturally-formed object can be so lifelike."

"Sizhui! It's us! It's us!" exclaimed Jingyi, excitedly pointing to the screen. In truth, he had been on the edge of his seat in excitement, awaiting his return in the play through of Senior Wei's memories. Sizhui had been the one to witness this, and so he nodded at the boy's words with a smile parents often reserved for their children.

"He can see that, idiot," said Jin Ling, purposely avoiding meeting eyes with anyone in the room, already expecting his inevitable appearance.

"It's only a stupid rock, given the title of a Goddess by who-knows-who. How dare people put it here to receive incense and worship!" sneered a familiar voice from behind.

"It's Peacock."

"Definitely Peacock."

"Peacock is back."

"SHUT UP!"

"Jin Ling?" Sizhui murmured in surprise.

"Damn," tutted Lan Jingyi. "Seems like the silence spell has lifted."

Jin Ling furrowed his brows furiously as he strutted inside. "There are thousands of millions of people in the world. Gods and Buddhas already have their hands full with their own matters. Who'd have the time to deal with the people?! If it really is incredible, then I'm gonna make a wish right now! I want the creature that's devouring souls in Buddha Mountain to appear before me right now! Will it be able to do this?!"

"*Jin Ling?*" came an astonished exclaim. "It was *you* ?!"

At the sound of the voice, Jin Ling awkwardly shifted where he sat, his cheeks as red as the Wen Clan's motif. *'I want to dig a hole and hide in it..'*

"That's right, that's right!" cheered a Jin disciple. "Well said, Young Master Jin!"

"Dark creatures are running amok in Buddha Mountain — Why haven't the deities taken care of them?"

Feeling frustration arise in him, Lan Jingyi made a sound of frustration. "It is so loud!"

"Like you're one to talk, you loudmouth," Jin Ling muttered.

"Say that again and I'll slap you all the way to Gusu!" exclaimed Lan Jingyi, outraged. "I'll let the old man deal with you!"

"*Old man?!*" coughed Lan Qiren furiously.

Lan Sizhui suddenly gasped. "Jingyi, look!"

The duo glanced up at the statue at once, only to notice how its unpleasant smile was even more eerie, especially accompanied by its newly-coloured angry crimson eyes.

"That looks creepy..." Jin Zixun murmured, happy to provide commentary.

"Not as creepy as your" Lan Jingyi coughed politely. "uncle."

"Hey," said Wei Wuxian playfully. On the surface, he was scolding the Lan disciple, but really, no one missed the identical smirks they exchanged. "Stop messing with people, it's mean."

Jin Ling's eyebrows were through the roof. He pointed to Wei Wuxian, and then gestured a hand to the rapidly paling Lan Qiren. No one needed extra emphasis.

"Her mouth was closed, right...?" said Lan Sizhui with a forced chuckle.

Lan Jingyi paled, his lips twitching into a false smile. "...And were her eyes always like this?"

"Hey, are you okay?!"

"Somebody collapsed!"

A Jiang disciple was cradling one of his peers in his arms, terror littered across his visage. Jin Ling hovered over them thoughtfully.

"What's wrong with him?" he murmured.

Lan Sizhui paled, "He looks like.."

'Like he is asleep,' he mentally added.

"Asleep?" murmured an older woman. "He looks as good as dead! Look at his eyes! So expressionless!"

"Was his soul taken, do you think? This might be another victim of that Goddess Statue."

With a great fearsome burst of wind, the candles surrounding the statue lit up in flames, illuminating the room that was previously consumed in darkness.

"What's happening?"

"Something dark is here!"

Both Jin Ling and Lan Sizhui exchanged equally shocked looks.

Suddenly sensing an unknown presence, Lan Sizhui spun around quickly. "Who's there?!"

Wei Wuxian sprinted towards the statue and swiftly poured a large bottle of liquor over the fire. Subsequently, he then pulled out a talisman and thrust it at the statue.

"Go Senior Wei!" The juniors cheered in tandem.

Many in the room were either cheering on the Demonic Cultivator, or remaining silent, too afraid to receive backlash.

"Look! The Goddess' pose has changed!"

"She moved!"

"Run!" exclaimed Sizhui.

"Run, run, run!" Wei Wuxian practically yelled. His attempts at getting them to safety, however, only proved to be fruitless. "Stop hacking at it! There's no use! There's no use, Jin Ling!"

"This is precisely why I never liked brats," said Wen Ruohan smartly. Wen Qing looked at him blankly, hoping to relay the fact that she *really didn't care in the least*.

Jin Zixuan was glancing around the room in an effort to find out who had spoken. His eyes landed on Wen Ruohan, but he immediately shook his head at the thought.

Nope — There was just no way.

"Let's charge!"

"So I've finally found the source!"

"Protect Young Master Jin!"

"Ahhh! The Goddess ate someone's soul!"

"Idiots! Who just rushes in like that?!" exclaimed Jiang Wanyin.

At the comment, Wen Ruohan burst into laughter that echoed throughout the room repetitively. Instead of being accompanied by more laughs, however, the room was instead rendered into utter *silence*.

Fearing for their lives, Jin Zixuan instinctively raised an arm in front of his son as protection. Everyone did more or so the same; they watched Wen Ruohan fearfully, knowing he was highly unpredictable and therefore would only see his intentions *after* he had voiced them.

Not knowing what such a terrifying man was to do, they could only helplessly tremble in fear and await his inevitable response.

"That situation was dire," he said seriously. Everyone listened with rapt attention. "Wei Wuxian even proved as much. Did no one take that as a sign they must leave?"

Wen Qing said blankly, "...What?"

"Did you not see? Wei Wuxian threw his liquor onto the fire! No man would waste such a precious concoction, lest it is absolutely necessary. As a powerful cultivator myself, I can say that with certainty. Therefore, you must have been in extreme danger."

"Excellent," said Wen Qing, at a loss for words. "Thank you for that."

Only silence followed.

"Nothing works against it! Let's get out of here!"

Wei Wuxian rolled his eyes throughout his frustration. "So you finally see that the situation is beyond hope?" He turned to the group of Lans. "Quick, send a signal and tell your sect's... Your sect's Hanguang-Jun to come up here!"

"Yes!" The Lan disciples began to search their robes but to no avail; their efforts resulted in them only empty handed.

"All of the signal illuminations..." said Lan Sizhui, exchanging a horrified glance with Lan Jingyi. "Were used up at the night at Mo Village."

Wei Wuxian ruffled his hair in annoyance. "You didn't restock such an important item?!"

Awkwardly fiddling with the hem of his sleeve, Lan Sizhui guiltily laughed. "We forgot... We never really use signals."

'Oh no!' As he walked away from the pair, Wei Wuxian suddenly froze as if recalling something. 'Jin Ling hasn't come out yet!'

"Oh no!"

"Is he gonna die?!" Nie Huaisang exclaimed, worriedly covering his face with his fan as he got too engrossed in the scene to think logically.

"Did he die?" deadpanned Lan Jingyi.

"...No."

Wei Wuxian, now mounted onto Lil' Apple's back, was abruptly stopped by Sizhui as he made to leave. "Young Master Mo! Young Master Mo! How do you know that the creature consuming people's souls is neither a spirit, nor a beast, but rather the Goddess Statue?!"

"There are too many deceased souls in the area of ancient tombs," Wei Wuxian explained. "So it definitely isn't a soul-consuming spirit or beast. There are too many souls floating around. If it were either of these, would it have decided not to eat any? No."

"That... Kind of makes sense...?"

"Wei Wuxian is too smart, it's useless trying to understand him."

Sizhui rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "Right... We all thought that because the landslide and thunder-stricken tombs were what led to the incidents, then it must be a soul-consuming beast."

"Wrong." Wei Wuxian interjected. "The order is wrong and the correlation is wrong. Between the landslide and the soul-consuming incidents, the latter came first and the former came second. The incidents were the cause, while the landslide was the effect!"

As he explained, the two Lan disciples could only listen in awe. "Think about it. The first person to lose their soul, the slaggard. He was stuck on the mountain for a night, then married someone just a few days after he returned."

"What's wrong with that?" said Sizhui curiously.

Wei Wuxian folded his arms to his chest petulantly. "Everything is wrong! He's a penniless man who never does anything, so how could he have found enough money to

hold such a grand wedding?"

Lan Jingyi nodded, but nonetheless said, "Couldn't he have just borrowed money from a friend? Or from someone rich, who he was going to pay back?"

Jin Ling murmured something that sounded like "Not everyone's like you."

Lan Jingyi and Lan Sizhui tilted their heads in confusion.

'That's right, they're Young Masters who don't have to think about being poor or not.' Wei Wuxian thought.

"So that's what you think of us?" said Lan Jingyi, outraged.

"Wei Qianbei..." added Lan Sizhui helplessly.

"Did you forget you're also a Young Master?" exclaimed Jin Ling.

"We have living standards!" concluded Ouyang Zizhen.

Wei Wuxian sighed, "The sluggard suddenly married after the night of the landslide. Something special must have happened during the night."

"Something special...?"

"There was a storm that night, and he took shelter in the mountain," hinted Wei Wuxian. "On Buddha Mountain, what is a place that provides shelter?"

"The Goddess Temple!" Lan Sizhui exclaimed.

"That's right. And when most people go to a temple, there's only one thing that they always do — they make wishes. Like becoming lucky, earning money, marrying someone, and so on. The Goddess granted his wish. She sent down lightning and allowed him to see the valuables in the coffin. This is why there's an old man dressed in intricate burial robes among the souls drifting on Buddha Mountain. His burial goods were definitely taken by the sluggard!"

"-And now that his wish had been fulfilled, as the price to pay, the Goddess came upon him the night of his marriage and sucked away his soul!"

"You are just guessing, are you not?" said Lan Sizhui.

"Yes, but following the line of the guesses, all of the things that happened can be explained," refuted Wei Wuxian. "Back then, A-Yan had just entered her engagement. She definitely made a wish at the Goddess temple. The wishes of recently-engaged girls always follow the pattern of 'I wish my husband would love me for his entire life.' "

"And how do *you* know what these engaged women do?" said Jin Ling suggestively. And then he thought of the Guanyin Temple and Wei Wuxian's subsequent atrocious confession. "Oh, of course you'd know."

"Can such wishes really be granted?" Lan Jingyi exclaimed.

"It's easy," said Wei Wuxian with a slight shrug. "Her husband's 'entire life' just needed to end as soon as possible."

"The statue is really too cunning," tutted Jin Zixuan. "Bending her wish like that."

Many nodded in agreement to his statement, whereas others, such as Wen Ruohan, were busy admiring the morbid loophole.

"Oh! Oh!" Lan Jingyi exclaimed excitedly. "So then A-Yan's husband died!"

"So this is what happened! But then why was A-Yan's soul returned to her?"

"Have you forgotten?" Lan Sizhui explained. "A-Yan's father, blacksmith Zheng, lost his soul as well. He had definitely been to the Goddess temple to make a wish! He wished that the soul of his daughter, A-Yan, could be found!"

Wei Wuxian tore Lan Sizhui's sword from his grasp and swiftly cut a section off a nearby bamboo tree, subsequently carving small holes in the grass plant. "After her soul returned, uncontrollably, she began to imitate the Goddess' dance, even her smile."

"Wow, then everything can be explained!"

As Lil' Apple had been left into Lan Jingyi's desperate care, he was responsible for retaining the donkey when it attempted to struggle and get away. His attempts, of course, were made with great resistance. "What is wrong with this donkey?!" he lamented.

Wei Wuxian stared at his newly-crafted bamboo flute with no small amount of pride. "This is why the pointer of the compass of evil doesn't move, why the spirit-atraction flags can't summon anything, why both weapons and talismans have no use — It's a God!"

"That's a big leap of logic..." said Ouyang Zizhen with a sigh. "But first an evil arm, and now a supposed *God*? Wei-Qianbei, do you ever get a break of some sort?"

"Judging by what we've seen so far, no, he in fact does not."

Still pulling Lil' Apple back by the reins, Lan Jingyi didn't notice it until there was an explosion of screams and yells: the Goddess Statue was no longer dancing — no, it wasn't even standing, in fact, it was on all fours like a sort of insect, crawling through bushes across the muddy forest floor.

Wei Wuxian stared at the Goddess. '*This is an untitled deity born from nourishment of hundreds of years of incense! To deal with it using the things used to deal with beasts and ghosts would only be fanning the fire!*'

"What is that..? It looks a bit gross."

It was only then that the statue turned its head, showing the disciples its blood-stained face, as well as the horrifying sight of a lifeless body and half-eaten arm clutched in its grasp.

Sizhui paled. "We cannot be this unlucky.."

"Wei Wuxian is the unlucky one. You're just unlucky because you're around him."

"Understatement of the day."

"AHHHHHHH!" Following the yell, an arrow instantaneously flew towards the statue and struck its forehead, chipping at the hard stone. Standing beneath the statue was Jin Ling, who was holding his bow in hand as a flurry of Jin disciples crowded him eagerly.

"Young Master Jin!"

"You're here!"

"Young Master Jin!"

Upon seeing the lack of impact Jin Ling's arrow did to the statue, Wei Wuxian closed his eyes and sighed. Then he placed the bamboo flute to his lips.

And blew.

Lan Jingyi and Lan Sizhui desperately covered their ears at the sudden onslaught of horrific music. "Look at the situation we are in! Why are you playing the flute? Argh! It sounds so awful!"

Lan Qiren, who had been resting in order to recover from his latest Qi Deviation, awakened to the sound of the flute. As soon as it resonated within his ears, he rapidly paled. "S-Stop the flute!!"

"You sure he's gonna be okay?" Wei Wuxian asked, gesturing to the now-unconscious body.

"Yes, he will be fine. This is quite normal." Lan Xichen smiled, about to wipe Lan Qiren's mouth with his handkerchief but suddenly paused.

"Young Master Wei... It appears my handkerchief is stained with blood... Could I trouble you to borrow yours?"

"Sure."

'With such a poorly crafted flute made from just a few chops, the fact that it still makes any sound at all is good enough!' Wei Wuxian thought. 'Anything will work, as long as its energy of hostility is enough to tear the Goddess into pieces!'

"He certainly didn't think about the possibility of the Ghost General showing up.."

"I kind of feel sorry for him now. Everyone said he summoned the Ghost General on purpose."

"But then again, the Ghost General is his weapon. How can we fault him for using it?" Wen Ning shifted uncomfortably.

The screen switched to a motionless corpse chained up by all four of his colourless limbs. Talismans were scattered across its body like articles of clothing, fluttering along with the harsh breeze of the wind.

'Be awakened, O sleeping ghoul!'

The corpse's eyes shot open, revealing two pearl-white slits.

"Aha! Speak of the corpse! It's the Ghost General!"

The screen switched back to the statue, which was waving its bloody arms around with a wide, menacing smile. "Heehee, heehee, it's the Young Master who made the wish!"

"That's oddly creepy," said Wen Ruohan good-naturedly.

"Wow, *really*?" Wen Qing replied, her words coated with a thick sarcasm.

The Goddess Statue lowered its hand in an attempt to capture Jin Ling. Before it could reach him, the young cultivator had already unsheathed his sword and got into a stance, ready to attack.

"Young Master Mo is right! Cultivational weapons really are futile against the Goddess!" yelled Lan Sizhui, horrified. "Young Master Jin! Send out the signals on you! This is not something that we are able to deal with!"

And then he suddenly recalled Jin Ling's previous words: *'If it really is incredible, then I'm gonna make a wish right now! I want the creature that's devouring souls in Buddha Mountain to appear before me right now! Will it be able to do this?!"*

"Right! It was Jin Ling's irresponsible wish in the Goddess Temple that caused it to attack so suddenly!"

"I'm here for my reward!" said the statue's thundering voice.

Jin Ling watched as the figure approached and tightened his grip on Suihua. *'If this blow doesn't cut her head off, I'll be dead here for sure!'*

A second glance at the incoming God had him sighing in resignation. *'Death it is, then!'*

Fearful for her child's life, Jiang Yanli felt a familiar striking feeling of worry permeate her. She unconsciously reached for her husband's assuring hand, who squeezed hers in turn. "A-Xuan..."

"He'll be okay," he said confidently. "He's our son after all."

Seeing his parents' immense worry, Jin Ling was suddenly given an overwhelming feeling of guilt. Why had he always rushed into danger like that, trying to prove himself? Why was he throwing away the life his parents had sought to be protected? Why was he always so reckless?

Suddenly, there was a terribly audible rustle within the bushes. Hearing the sound, although possibly fearing it, the Dancing Fairy Statue froze in its tracks.

Jin Ling frowned. "What's that sound?"

Wei Wuxian continued to play the song, though he stayed ridiculously oblivious. *'The thing I summoned seems to be a bit too powerful, doesn't it?'*

"Wait— So he *didn't* know it was the ghost general? It was unintentional this entire time?!"

"Haha! He has such bad luck!"

The sound of chains rattling broke the silence and reverberated throughout the dark forest.

"It's the ghost general! It's the ghost general, it's Wen Ning!" yelled a Jiang disciple over the chaos.

Wen Ning stepped into view, his once vibrant eyes now lifeless and his skin lacking the natural hue. He looked crazy and unhinged as if he had been drained of all vitality, leaving only a shell of his former self.

Wei Wuxian's face rapidly paled; the flute fell from his lips out of pure surprise. "Wen Ning? Hadn't he been turned to dust?!"

'Wen Ning was the most powerful corpse that I had created before I died.'

Wen Ning moved erratically and unpredictably, like a wild animal lashing out when in danger; he leapt towards the Goddess Statue with unprecedented strength, slamming his fist into its neck and cleanly destroying half of the stone attaching it to the torso.

'Aside from how he didn't fear injuries, flames, coldness, poison, and anything else that living humans fear, he was no different than humans. He could even think on his own — the only one of his kind.'

The statue toppled over at the force of the impact, its head no longer supported and rolling to the side. Even with such visible destruction, the Ghost General was not done, no, for he grabbed a large boulder from the ground and lifted it above the statue's remains, his eyes emotionless and distant.

"Ah- I think the statue is already long gone..."

"Um.. This is like.. Abuse of statues or something. Right?"

"I think it deserved it," said another. "Hurting all those poor kids like that... it deserves a thousand deaths!"

'But the current Wen Ning clearly lacks his own will!'

Wen Ning dropped the large stone onto the statue and it immediately crumbled into hundreds of unrecognisable pieces.

"Close in on him!" yelled one of the cultivators in chase.

"Fellow cultivators, we must stop him so that he doesn't escape! This is Wen Ning we're talking about here!"

The group of cultivators surrounded him, pointing their unsheathed blades in his direction. None made the initiative of attacking first, their fear evident on their faces.

"What's to be scared of? It's not like the Yiling Patriarch is here! His owner's already been cut to pieces!"

"If we kill him, from today on we'll be famous!"

Lan Sizhui immediate stood to his defence. "But he clearly saved us just a moment ago-"
"

"A mere dog who lost its owner, yet he's still so arrogant!"

Wen Ning turned his head at the voice — his face held no visible expression yet his eyes were emitting killing intent that seemed to roll off him in waves.

'Oh no. The melody was too aggressive, too sudden. It evoked the killing intent in him.'

"My word, has he not learned?" sniffed Sect Leader Yao. "This dear corpse of yours is a *mass murdering weapon*, if you've forgotten. Why are you so careless?!"

"I'd like to see you do it yourself," spat Ouyang Zizhen. "Try to play an instrument *while* controlling arguably the strongest corpse in existence *while* trying to play it as calmly as you possibly can *while* people are getting slaughtered by a statue right in front of you!"

"Well said, Zizhen," said Lan Sizhui approvingly.

"Couldn't have said it better," agreed Lan Jingyi.

Wen Ning reached out a hand to the Jiang disciple who had spoken the crude words, his fingers barely brushing the skin of the boy's neck. But before he could proceed, Wei Wuxian had already changed the song he played, instead focusing on calming Wen Ning's rage. 'How about a calmer, quiet tune.. Calmer, quieter..'

He closed his eyes in concentration. '*Calmer..*'

'Quieter..'

With a flash of black, the screen switched to a different scene: Two familiar figures were sitting beside a fire, one bloody and bruised and covered in bandages; the other was leaning against a stone wall, quietly humming a song.

"Wangxian," Lan Wangji murmured, the ghost of a smile on his lips.

"Hanguang-Jun, you really know how to capture this lowly one's heart," said Wei Wuxian bashfully, rubbing small circles into the robes of Lan Wangji's chest. He looked up sheepishly through thick eyelashes. "I really thought it was called *Love Song of Lan Zhan and Wei Ying*... but to think you already named it before we got married. How confident of you, Er-Gege"

If the tips of Lan Wangji's ears were red, then, well, it wasn't much of a secret considering Wei Wuxian's teasing laughter echoing through the cave.

Wen Ning launched two cultivators in the air, his large, unfeeling hands grasping their throats threateningly. “This corpse is gonna kill someone!”

Lan Jingyi, though feeling remorse, was by no means sympathetic. “You were clearly the people who provoked him first.”

“At least *someone* has some brains here.”

“Here I was beginning to lose all hope with this generation.”

“As they say, you reap what you sow,” said Jin Zixuan. “Really, what did they expect when they provoked him?”

Wen Ning looked up in surprise, hearing his words despite their distance. He was the one to kill Young Master Jin — he murdered him in cold blood. So why was the man *defending* him?

Although the flute itself made the most horrific of sounds, the song was played articulately, the beautiful stream of music accommodating the instrument. As soon as Wen Ning heard the melodic tune played by Wei Wuxian, his eyes instantaneously shot open as if struck.

Wei Wuxian narrowed his eyes with no small amount of determination. ‘Wen Ning, it’s me!’

Lan Sizhui listened to the tune thoughtfully. “Now I know why this song was so familiar at the time. I thought I’d heard it before. Isn’t this from Gusu?”

“Yeah!” exclaimed Lan Jingyi, nodding enthusiastically in agreement. “Senior Wei and Hanguang-Jun are always playing it together! I like to think that this is the song they chose to express their love.”

“But why would Wei Wuxian know one of the melodies from Gusu? I don’t remember them teaching us anything of the sort!”

Wen Ning suddenly loosened his grip on the cultivators, allowing them to drop to the floor as he dashed to Wei Wuxian’s side.

“Are you alright?” a voice asked the two who were spluttering on the floor, clutching desperately at their sore necks.

“Report to the Sect Leader immediately! Somebody can control the Ghost General using a flute!”

As realisation dawned on him, Lan Sizhui could only watch as Wei Wuxian's fingers danced across the bamboo, unable to comprehend the situation. "Young Master Mo!"

But no, this didn't deter Wei Wuxian from continuing to play. Instead, it encouraged him, for every time he took a step back, Wen Ning would obediently follow, as if a predator cornering its terrified prey. But right now, Wei Wuxian was the puppet master, controlling Wen Ning like one would their doll.

When they were finally far away enough for the group, Wei Wuxian looked meaningfully at Wen Ning, hoping to convey his message through the song. 'Go back, Wen Ning!'

"So he was telling the Ghost general to leave...?"

"He was protecting the young disciples to the end, even if it meant risking his identity being revealed."

"So it turns out he wanted the Ghost General to leave... I really have misunderstood this man."

"It's such a pity we have to invade his private thoughts to find out. If only he was more open and explained himself, perhaps we would have earned another ally in this generation."

"I don't think anyone would have listened anyway," said Jin Ling solemnly. "After all... up until now, he was greatly feared, wasn't he?"

As Wei Wuxian stepped back, the corpse only followed. This pattern continued as they drew further and further into the forest, until Wei Wuxian abruptly fell into a hard surface. His wrist was grasped.

He slowly hesitantly turned his head, only to lock eyes with brilliant gold. 'Lan Wangji!'

The girls were unusually silent.

"Hey, Hanguang-Jun," said Lan Jingyi good-naturedly. "You said this was where you recognised Senior Wei... I still don't understand. Is the back of his head so recognisable? Is his abysmal flute playing really how atrocious Wei Wuxian was behind closed doors?"

"Don't be silly, Jingyi," said Lan Sizhui. "Though I must confess, I am also curious..."

"It was *obviously* the fact he's controlling Wen Ning," said Jin Ling, his nose slightly raised. "Who else has heard of someone controlling that?" He suddenly thought of a certain uncle.

"Well..." Wei Wuxian shared a glance with Lan Wangji, who merely flashed him a small upturn of the lips. "I guess you'll have to find out with the rest of us, haha!"

"Senior Wei!"

Chapter End Notes

Next Chapter: Back to Gusu!

Cloud Recess I - The Present

Chapter Notes

Posted: 19/06/21

Revised: 03/06/23

I am really so sorry for the atrocious update! My asthma has been horrible recently (probably due to hay fever smh) so I've been feeling a bit under the weather.

But hey, at least I updated. I'm going to a polo match this weekend and I have lots of revision to do for exams, so I did this chapter knowing it's the last day I'll have the time!

Thank you for taking the time to read this story! :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

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"Senior Wei!"

Wei Wuxian's breath suddenly stuttered. '*Oh no. Back then, Lan Wangji had seen with his own eyes how I use the flute to control corpses.*'

“*Oh no?* Really, Wei Wuxian?” said Jiang Wanyin sarcastically. “You’re so afraid of Lan Wangji that you shamelessly hang off his arm, professing your adoration for him right then and there? *Oh no?* Oh no, what? Oh no, Lan Wangji is just as shameless as you and will protect you, not allowing even a finger to touch you? Or *oh no*, I can no longer act proper and must embarrass myself to every degree? *Oh no*, Wei Wuxian, I agree. I really agree!”

“He...” murmured Lan Jingyi unsurely, glancing between Jiang Wanyin and Jin Ling. “Is your Uncle okay?”

Jin Ling huffed and rolled his eyes. “Who’s okay when Wei Wuxian’s involved? But honestly, Uncle, you’re being a bit embarrassing, yourself.”

“He has a point, though,” said Sizhui softly with a small smile. He gazed at the two cultivators dressed in red and white in front of him with no small amount of love and adoration. “Hanguang-Jun... he’ll really protect Xian-gege no matter the cost.”

Lan Wangji’s gaze shifted until he locked eyes with Wei Wuxian, his piercing gold eyes both intimidating and enrapturing as they peeled through Wei Wuxian’s many constructed barriers that separated him from the world and opened the windows to his soul, staring through as a most welcomed intruder.

“Wow,” said Lan Jingyi, at a loss for words. “Wow, Hanguang-Jun. I really admire the way you speak without words.” Many younger Lan disciples who were huddled behind him enthusiastically nodded in tandem.

“Really admirable...”

“Hanguang-Jun is certainly an esteemed cultivator.”

“Hey. Wait. Everyone dissociate from life for a moment,” said Ouyang Zizhen smartly, stroking his non-existent goatee like a well-accomplished cultivator. “Do you see the unabridged recognition? The concern seeping from Lan Wangji’s very soul as he stares upon Senior Wei? This certainly marks the beginning of a new era—”

“Zizhen. Words.”

“Yes, yes, er,” said Ouyang Zizhen eloquently. “Well, what I mean to say is... Hanguang-Jun doesn’t look *cold!* Look, he doesn’t look very happy—never does, mind you—but my point is he isn’t looking at Senior Wei coldly like he would to normal commoners such as us!”

Many nodded understandingly at his words, whereas others, such as Jingyi and Jin Ling, wished to refute that last cheeky statement.

“You’re right, they’re... twinkling with stars! No wonder Wei Wuxian was so infatuated by his gaze!”

“Is,” Wei Wuxian corrected off-handedly.

“No, no, no, little miss, they’re shining with *hearts!*”

“Do you need your eyes fixed? I see no hearts! His eyes are yellow! It’s definitely stars!”

“*Gold!*” Nie Huaisang felt the need to add.

“Hey, I’ve heard a rumour of sorts,” said Lan Jingyi smartly, beckoning some to gather around. “I’m an insider at Cloud Recess, everyone’s favourite, you know?” (A cough. “Jingyi.”) “Anyway, I get all the gossip. I’ve heard from a very credible source that Hanguang-Jun liked Senior Wei when they were still young disciples like us.”

As the others ‘ahh’ed in awe and admiration, Lan Jingyi nodded appreciatively. “Yes, yes, and this must mean Hanguang-Jun still likes him. Therefore, upon seeing Wei Wuxian, he was really happy.”

“Isn’t that sad?” said Nie Huaisang solemnly. “Wangji-xiong was really doing his best... And Wei-xiong just thinks he wants to hurt him.”

Nie Mingjue was smart in that he did *not* even ask what was wrong with Huaisang .

"Sect Leader, the Ghost General went over there!" said a voice, quickly severing the connection.

"Quick, lead the way!"

"Where is he?!"

Wei Wuxian narrowed his eyes. 'They've come up. I need to tell Wen Ning to hurry.'

“Come now, must you all be so delusional?” said Sect Leader Yao, his cheeks an angry red. “He is protecting a fierce corpse! One who is attempting to slaughter countless, at that! I really don’t know how you all manage to justify his evil actions when he clearly doesn’t deserve *any* chance at redemption *nor your pity*—”

And then he abruptly stopped, like a puppet whose strings had been cut. Many eyes nonchalantly drifted to the Lans — no, to Lan Qiren, to see if he was okay. And then they gathered he was fine, though coughing an unhealthy amount of blood while unconscious. Healthy, then. — then their eyes snapped to Lan Wangji, who looked *smug*?! But, of course, despite this being the first time they managed to *read* the famous Second Young Master Lan’s facial expression, they revelled more in the fact the old Yao Sect Leader had *finally* shut up! Really, though some agreed with what he was trying to say, the way in which he expressed it made them want to sympathise with the Yiling Patriarch. (Which was certainly a problem.)

With his wrist still caught in Lan Wangji's tight grip, Wei Wuxian placed his fingers on the flute and one again began to play.

'Whatever. Tens of thousands of people know how to play the flute, and the sheer number of those who imitate me in controlling corpses with the flute could form an entire sect. If nothing works, I'll just refuse to confess no matter what!'

Jiang Wanyin looked like he wanted to jump into Yunmeng Lake, climb back out, shake the life out of Wei Wuxian until he was disoriented and jump back in again. Many shared the sentiment.

"I just... I don't understand," said Jin Zixuan, flabbergasted. "I used to think you were really smart, Wei Wuxian—" ("What? Really?!") "—especially when you had those one-sided arguments with me. But... I am really so lost as to how..."

"How can someone be so *dense*? Are you okay over there, Yiling Patriarch?"

"He's always had a bad memory," said Jiang Wanyin much too calmly. "I suppose he must have forgotten his wits too. And perhaps the appropriate decorum."

"I just pity him at this point. Honestly..."

'Wen Ning, go quickly, hide as soon as possible!'

As Lan Wangji watched him play, his eyes narrowed and his fingers tightened around Wei Wuxian's wrist.

Lan Xichen watched the scene with an unfamiliar feeling in his chest.

Around this point in time, when Wei Wuxian was dead, the only emotion he ever saw on Wangji's face was *pure despair*. And since Wei Wuxian returned, he began to see it less and less. He never thought he'd see that expression of pure anguish ever again, but this...

He had never witnessed how Wangji reacted when he first saw Wei Wuxian again. He had seen the years of mourning, wallowing in despair, and then the crumbs of the aftermath, where they grew closer and travelled together.

But this...

Wangji was, in simplest terms, *elated*; it was like Wei Wuxian had just given him the stars. Lan Xichen had seen Wangji in many states; closed off, mourning, longing, upset, angry, happy, but...

That expression certainly wasn't something Lan Xichen had ever seen on his little brother's face.

He often blames himself for it, now, instead of Wei Wuxian. How could he call Wei Wuxian Wangji's only mistake? In reality, it was really *him* who was the only mistake in Wangji's life — he wasn't a good enough brother. (Perhaps he should have tried harder. Perhaps he should

have listened to Wangji when he begged and pleaded for them to save the Wen remnants in the burial mounds.)

The pain from Lan Wangji's fierce grasp caused Wei Wuxian to yelp in pain and he lost his grip on the bamboo flute, his fingers slipping off the smooth material and allowing it to fall to the floor. Fearing that Lan Wangji would chase after the fierce corpse, Wei Wuxian hurriedly grabbed the man's wrist that had caught hold of his own. "Don't chase after him!"

Lan Wangji remained silent, standing in a sort of stupor where he was unmoving, staring into Wei Wuxian's eyes as if entranced. There was a flash of purple and all of a sudden, Jiang Cheng marched into the scene, his expression positively murderous.

"*And... cue the entrance of the side character, Sect Leader Jiang!*"

"Hahaha, Wei Wuxian and Lan Wangji have certainly grabbed hold of the scene, haven't they? *Sect Leader Jiang*, who's that?"

"He has to bear witness to this dog food while having no wife of his own!" Lan Jingyi shook his head sadly with an exaggerated sniffle. "What a truly pitiful man!"

"I think a fair number of us here require your *great pity* as well, Great Master Lan."

"Sect Leader, he's the one who summoned him!" stated a Jiang disciple, pointing to Wei Wuxian.

Jiang Wanyin's lips pulled into a snarl as he idly fiddled with the deadly spiritual weapon that lay innocently in his hand in the form of a ring. "Well, well.. You're back? Wei Wuxian!" Zidian subsequently transformed into a long purple whip that emitted violent shocks of purple lightning, illuminating the trees within the dark forest.

Yu Ziyuan leaned back in her seat with an extremely pleased expression. "Very good, A-Cheng. Very good. Teach that arrogant fool a lesson. A dog should know its rightful place!"

Jiang Fengmian sighed into the air, not replying in favour of preventing yet another unwarranted argument.

Without a moment's hesitation, Lan Wangji waved his hand and summoned his guqin, stepping in front of Wei Wuxian protectively as if daring Jiang Wanyin to attack.

And attack he did. The pair exchanged many sophisticated blows and parries, each showcasing an outstanding display of strength. The disciples watching had their eyes wide in awe, not daring to blink even once lest they miss an important moment.

"Wow! The Zidian Whip is going up against the Wangji Guqin!"

"A fight between the most prominent cultivators is truly magnificent!"

"Come on Lan Wangji, beat up that great grape and profess your love to Wei Wuxian already!"

"A showcase of *strength!* Lan Wangji knows the secret to every maiden's heart!" To prove her point, the girl who had spoken made a show of dramatically swooning and falling into a friend's arms.

Wei Wuxian blinked. "Maiden?"

Jiang Wanyin muttered bitterly, "Well they aren't very far off, considering the way you seem to act around 'your' Lan Wangji every second of the day."

With the two cultivators distracted, Wei Wuxian immediately saw the situation as a chance. He flashed a sheepish smile to Jiang Wanyin, whose eyebrows were furrowed in fury, and then turned away, intending to escape through the darkness of the forest.

Jiang Cheng narrowed his eyes. "You want to run? Hmph!" Zidian spat out of his hand and collided into Wei Wuxian's small frame, sending him crashing into Lil' Apple's back.

"A-Xian!" Jiang Yanli cried in surprise.

"Senior Wei!" The juniors called.

Lan Wangji unconsciously pulled Wei Wuxian closer, wanting to hide him in his arms and away from the world, where no one can hurt him.

(He would be lying if he said he didn't send a few glares in Jiang Wanyin's direction.)

Wei Wuxian hissed in pain as he gently massaged his back. "Ow... Ow..."

Jiang Wanyin and Lan Wangji both stared in equal amounts of surprise. 'Not Possession?!"

"What? Why are they surprised?"

"Zidian is a spiritual weapon that separates the soul and physical form of someone whose body has been seized by a spirit," explained a Jiang disciple. "It should have removed Wei Wuxian from Mo Xuanyu's body, who had possessed it through demonic cultivation, so to speak. But it didn't... How strange."

“How strange, indeed.”

Wei Wuxian hid behind Lil' Apple as he began to rant furiously, "How amazing! You really can do anything when you're from a powerful sect, can't you?! You can even beat up anyone you want to! Tsk tsk tsk!"

Jiang Wanyin's eyes narrowed into a glare. "Just who in the hell are you?!"

“Senior Wei.”

“Senior Wei.”

“Senior Wei.”

“Senior Wei.”

“...” Jiang Wanyin speechlessly watched as all of the juniors replied in tandem, their eyes twinkling. “Just who are you calling Senior, huh?” he chastised as he roughly pulled on the lobe of Jin Ling’s ear. “Hey! I’m just as much your Uncle as him, so how come you seem to respect him more?”

Just as much Jin Ling’s Uncle as him... Wei Wuxian repeated the words in his mind over and over again, a large smile pulling at his lips. It was small comments like this from Jiang Cheng that never failed to make Wei Wuxian’s heart buzz with warmth.

Wei Wuxian suppressed the desperate urge to snort. 'Of course Zidian can't whip my soul out. I never possessed anyone's body. It's a sacrifice, a forced sacrifice!'

Jiang Wanyin rolled his eyes, muttering something Jin Ling heard as “I know that now...”

“Oh! I get it!”

“That makes so much sense now!”

“Now isn’t that just the most useful thing ever?” Nie Huaisang nodded at his own words, snapping his fan shut in a palm. “A shame he made Lan-xiong falter there, though, re-considering his identity.”

Nie Mingjue blinked in confusion. *Just what happened to my sheepish little brother while I was gone, huh?*

“How useful... It couldn’t even be detected by a spiritual weapon such as that,” said Wen Ruohan, leaning forward in interest. “I’ll have to find this array and study it myself.”

One of the disciples nervously laughed. "Sect Leader Jiang, you might not know, but Mo Xuanyu is one of the LanlingJin sect's... Ahem."

"-Because he had low spiritual powers and didn't work hard in cultivation, and had that sort of... He was thrown out of the LanlingJin Sect."

"-In my opinion, he probably ventured onto the wrong path since the right path didn't work for him. It doesn't have to be... That the Yiling Patriarch possessed him."

"That sort of? Which sort of?" Jiang Wanyin inquired.

"Get the hint, you idiot."

"Do you really have to get the poor kid to spell it out for you?"

"Uh... His head has some... Issues."

The Jin disciples who knew of Mo Xuanyu's infamy all nodded in agreement.

"He dared to assault his own brother."

"He truly was a lunatic."

"A lunatic indeed."

"I'm glad he's gone!"

"Hey, that's going a bit *too far* ."

The Jiang Sect Leader glanced at Wei Wuxian, who was now fully hiding behind the donkey as a shield. 'According to his taste, he definitely wouldn't choose to possess such a madman's body..'

"Hey, it wasn't my choice," Wei Wuxian murmured disgruntledly, blowing away a stray lock of hair.

"You think I don't know that now?" Jiang Cheng rolled his eyes, and then added more sarcastically, "You know, I always thought you did have a thing for those lunatics, since you seemed to relate so much to them. Therefore, I came to the conclusion that the most favourable body for you was *that* ." Wei Wuxian half-heartedly glowered at him.

Wei Wuxian internally sighed in relief. 'I can't believe that Mo Xuanyu being an idiot has saved me.'

Jiang Wanyin's gaze never moved from where it lay on Wei Wuxian's pitiful form.
"Indeed. Then... Take him back!"

"Yes!"

Sect Leader Yao raised his head arrogantly, the silence spell now broken. "Well done, Sect Leader Jiang."

Wei Wuxian paled. 'But I still can't get rid of his doubts!' He quickly ran behind Lan Wangji and clutched onto his white robes desperately. "What are you gonna do to me?!"

The girls hastily nodded their heads in approval, glancing at one another as they exchanged excited commentaries.

"Well done, Wei Wuxian!"

"Seeking help from Hanguang-Jun's noble self in a time of need!"

"How smart!"

"Truly admirable!"

"Hey, hold on, hold on," said Lan Jingyi. "He preferred to go with Lan Wangji, who he thinks hates him, rather than to leave with Sect Leader Jiang... does that mean he held *some* fondness for Hanguang-Jun back then?"

Nie Huaisang murmured under his breath, "I think I'd do the same if my brother was out for my head, mind you."

"What was that, Huaisang?"

"Nothing, Da-Ge!" came the swift response.

Lan Wangji simply refused to move an inch, and instead manoeuvred himself to block Wei Wuxian protectively.

Jiang Wanyin's lips curled into a snarl. "Second Young Master Lan, are you making this difficult on purpose?"

"Sect Leader Jiang, the evidence is right before your eyes," said Lan Wangji, his emotionless expression not once wavering. "Mo Xuanyu hasn't been possessed, so why should you want to trouble such an unimportant person?"

Lan Wangji determinedly avoided the many glowers he suddenly received from a certain part of the room. Most of all, he needed to focus on the pout Wei Ying was sending in his direction.

"Not you," he said softly. "I said that to protect Wei Ying. You are important. Very important."

"And?" Wei Wuxian blinked innocently.

"You are my everything," said Lan Wangji, gently kissing the crown of his head. "My love. My partner. My soulmate. Everything."

Satisfied, the Yiling Patriarch settled back into the circle of his husband's arms.

'I need to find a way to get rid of both sides.. ' Wei Wuxian thought pensively. And then his expression positively lit up as he finally strung together an idea. 'Aha!'

Wen Qing narrowed her eyes, "I know that look... Very, very well, in fact. Wei Wuxian is going to cause trouble. I just hope he doesn't do anything stupid and embarrass himself further."

Wen Ruohan leaned over in interest, his eyes carrying a hint of mischief. "Trouble? What kind of trouble?"

Wen Qing sent him a look that she hoped he interpreted to be of disgust. "Not you too..."

Wei Wuxian hid his smile behind a hand, "Sect Leader Jiang, um, you bothering me like this is making me feel really troubled."

"What's this?"

"Even if you don't like me, I won't just follow anyone who waves his hand at me."

"Okay, okay."

"We understand, that is reasonable."

"People like you, for example, I have no interest in." He pointed to Jiang Cheng to further emphasise his point.

The girls nodded, "That's right. Second Young Master Lan is the only one for him."

Jiang Wanyin crossed his arms curiously. "Oh? Then, may I ask, which type of person do you like?"

"Which type?" Wei Wuxian grinned as he slung his hands over Lan Wangji's shoulders, his head snuggled into the soft fabric of the cultivator's neck. "Well, people like Hanguang-Jun, I do like very much."

The room was rendered silent.

And then after a few moments passed, the girls *screamed. Really loud.*

Jiang Wanyin was once again questioning why he was even there. He would like a break, thank you very much. And so it was out of annoyance, *certainly not a little bit of irritation that Wei Wuxian's shamelessness was being encouraged*, that he practically yelled. "*Shut up!*"

Wei Wuxian laughed unabashedly. "Jiang Cheng, is my fan group too much for you? Get yourself one and maybe I'll consider asking them to be quiet."

The girls' screaming died down because they eventually started to realise that it was probably more potent than any song from the *Collection of Spirit Turmoil*. Instead, they had (un)fortunately taken to yelling instead.

"Second Young Master Lan! Get him! Marry him! Go, go!"

"Who cares about self restraint?! Do the three bows! Quick, quick, or he'll slip away again!"

Jiang Wanyin and Lan Wangji shared an alarmed look.

'Annoying two people at once—killing two birds with one stone! They'll definitely feel disgusted and keep their distance from me and draw a line between me and them!'

"Hm?" To Wei Wuxian's surprise, Lan Wangji took his words at face value and grasped his wrist once again. "Mark your words."

"Yes! Mark your words, Wei Wuxian!"

Lan Qiren blinked.

"..."

"!!!!"

His nephew! What happened?! Why was his nephew holding Wei Wuxian so intimately? In front of everyone, no less! No, when did this even happen?! Why was Wangji acting so strangely?! Wasn't this before they got... got... Married?! *Someone stop them!*

"Uncle, calm down," said Lan Xichen slowly. "Uncle? Uncle!"

"This person, I will be taking them back to the Lan Sect."

And then Lan Wangji began to pull Wei Wuxian along, out of the forest, and away from the dumbfounded Jiangs.

Wei Wuxian blankly stared at the white figure in confusion, "...Huh?"

"Ohh! You're doomed, Wei Wuxian!"

"He brought this upon himself!" Wen Ruohan laughed. "Wei Wuxian, even *I'm* not finding your situation pitiful anymore!"

The gathering of girls (and a few boys now, so it seems) glanced at the former Sect Leader with equally sparkling eyes, '*He ships it too?!*'

Cloud Recess was widely known to be one of the most beautiful places in the entire world: The buildings were large, waterfalls were elegant, and surrounding hills towered over the appealing structure. The entire premises was enveloped in a soft mist that made the scene appear picturesque.

"It's so pretty!"

"I wish I could study there one day!"

"I've 'studied' there plenty of times..." Nie Huisang looked slightly nauseous. Wei Wuxian thought he was referring to the countless times his brother had sent him there to improve his abysmal grades, to no avail. He sort of pitied the man.

Within the sect, a loud, resounding bell could be heard. The serene atmosphere was suddenly disturbed by a loud shriek that was followed by a series of wails, startling the young Lans who were attentively listening to a lecture.

"No..! Let me go.."! Wei Wuxian howled, desperately clutching onto Lil' Apple as Lan Jingyi attempted to drag him through the large gates.

"Why are you crying?! You yourself said that you like Hanguang-Jun, so what are you wailing about, now that he has taken you back?!"

"He's right! Why are you complaining?" Jiang Wanyin murmured. "You got what you wanted and was taken back to Gusu, you little troublemaker. What's there to complain about?"

Wei Wuxian idly fiddled with his hair, "I may or may not have been afraid Lan Zhan would try to exorcise me..."

The fangroup were, shall we say, scandalised.

"You thought he was gonna hurt you?!"

"What?!"

"How on earth did you come to that conclusion?!"

"Have the rules on your wall of discipline increased in number...?" said Wei Wuxian through sniffles. "When I came here in the past, there were only three thousand.."

Jingyi raised his eyebrow curiously. "Just how long ago did you come here? It has been four thousand since a long time ago."

Wei Wuxian froze. And then moments later, he was pulling Lil' Apple by the reins in the opposite direction. "See you later!"

The crowd erupted into laughter at the comedic scene.

Wen Ruohan shook his head fondly. "This kid.. He's funny," he said to Wen Qing. "Can I adopt him?" (He ignored the glare shot at him by a certain Jiang Fengmian).

"I'm sure he wouldn't want to be siblings with Wen Chao," said Wen Qing as matter-of-fact.

"Who wants that disgrace as their son? Besides, I can always get rid of him," Wen Ruohan paused thoughtfully. "Speaking of... Where is that failure?"

"Wow," Wen Qing shook her head in exasperation. "We've been here for a while and you didn't know your sons were missing? Some father you are."

"Stop him!"

Wei Wuxian now let his crocodile tears flow freely. "Gahhhh! I'm not going up there, I'm not going up there! If I go I won't be able to ever leave again! Gahhh!"

Jingyi stared at Wei Wuxian, who was now sprawled over the floor, clinging onto Lil' Apple's leg and making a scene. "Alright! Stop being so noisy. Making noise is prohibited in Cloud Recess."

The older Lan disciples chuckled as if the statement were a sort of inside joke amongst them.

"It's a little Lan-er-gongzi!"

"He's a mix of Wei Wuxian and Lan-er-gongzi! How sweet!"

"I'm only being noisy because I don't want to go in there," Wei Wuxian continued desperately. "Please give up on me!"

"Let him cry," said a cold voice. All of the disciples simultaneously turned around, only to be met with Lan Wangji's retreating back. "When he becomes tired, carry him inside."

"How lively," said another, albeit more cheerful, voice.

"Yes, how lively," Nie Mingjue added, sending a smile to Lan Xichen, who dutifully sent one back. They both shared the same fond exasperation for their younger brothers, and so it was rare moments like this that they were just allowed to sit and appreciate what little troublemakers they have been blessed with.

"Sect Leader!" called the Lan disciples respectfully at Lan Xichen's sudden appearance.

"Xiongzhang," said Lan Wangji coolly. "Are you visiting Lianfang-Zun again?"

The atmosphere immediately darkened at the mention of Jin Guangyao.

"Yes, to talk over the next discussion conference at Koi Tower," said Lan Xichen softly. "It's not often that you bring somebody home, especially in such good spirits. You must treat your guest with way more courtesy than this."

"Good spirits?!" Jiang Cheng scoffed, "How is he in good spirits?"

"Look in his eyes! Can you not see the fondness? Sect Leader Jiang, I am quite disappointed, that I am."

"Good spirits?" Wei Wuxian practically wailed as Lan Xichen walked away. "Where did he see the good spirits? How can you call this being in good spirits?"

Lan Wangji glanced at Wei Wuxian and then seemed to make a decision as he looked back to the disciples. "Drag him inside."

"Yes!"

"Hanguang-Jun, where should we take him?" said Lan Jingyi.

"The Jingshi," Lan Wangji replied without a moment's hesitation.

"The Jingshi?!"

Wei Wuxian stared in bewilderment. "What's the Jingshi?"

"Yeah, what is it?!"

"I can see him concocting some sort of torture room in his mind right about now..." murmured a Lan disciple. "Look how he's shaking... he probably thinks it's where we put our prisoners."

"It's Hanguang-Jun's bedroom," the boy elaborated at the many confused looks he received.

"Oh."

"Hanguang-Jun's bedroom... I see..."

"Wait, *what*?!"

The scene suddenly changed to where Wei Wuxian was sitting idly by himself in the Jingshi, his head resting on a hand. The air was thick with the calming scent of sandalwood, the incense burner on one of the tables producing the aroma as it burned.

With nothing to do, Wei Wuxian's hands started curiously wandering places. He felt around the floor, only to find something quite unusual about a specific area. Wei Wuxian knocked on the spot a few times as confirmation and nodded determinedly. '*The sound that this piece of wood makes is clearly different from those of the others.*'

He curiously placed his hands on it and then pulled it off in one fell swoop. But what he saw left him speechless: There were seven or eight jars of emperor's smile snuggled together underneath, hidden under the very floorboard beside Hanguang-Jun's bed!

"WANGJI!" Lan Qiren gasped, clutching the fabric of his chest.

Lan Wangji merely coughed into a fist, attempting to escape the piercing eyes of his uncle. No, in fact, basically half of the room was staring at him. And not for the right reasons.

"I thought... I thought Lan Wangji didn't drink!"

"To think he sneaks in liquor! It's a scandal!"

"No way!"

"Who would have guessed?!"

"Lan Wangji, he really has changed, hasn't he? He even began to hide liquor!" murmured Wei Wuxian. He didn't seem too disappointed, however, for he happily proceeded to pull each jar out and began to drink to his heart's content.

Wei Wuxian suddenly reached a moment of epiphany after consuming a second of the jars. "That's right! I know where to find the token of passage!"

"Exactly!" Wen Ruohan nodded in total agreement. "You and I are really so similar! To think Wei Wuxian also understands how one is only at his peak with a bottle of liquor in his hand, hahaha!"

Jiang Cheng pursed his lips. "You can't just *find* a token of passage. I think you meant *steal* ."

Behind Cloud Recess, near the back hills, was a source of water named 'The Cold Springs'. It is used by the sect's male disciples and is capable of calming one's heart and quenching one's life.

As he hid behind a rock, Wei Wuxian glanced at the shadowy figure in the pond, briefly concealed by cold, frigid smoke. '*When the male disciples go into the cold spring, they'll have to take off their clothes, and the token of passage has to be inside of those clothes!*'

"Found it!" He glanced at the pile of neatly-folded robes on the floor. "...Damn, it's so neatly folded that I almost don't have the heart to go through it!"

Wei Wuxian began to hastily rummage through the clothes in search for the token of passage. '*Where is it.. huh?*'

"Nooo! Don't look, Wei Wuxian!"

"It's over!"

"Lan Wangji, why did you leave him alone? He's bound to get into some sort of mischief or the other!"

"This is!" he glanced at the figure standing in the pond, who appeared much more clearly as the large cloud of smoke cleared. '*Lan Wangji?!*'

Jin Zixuan's hands, that had previously been wrapped around his wife, smoothly slipped upwards until his palms were pressing to Jiang Yanli's eyes, concealing her view of the screen. "A-Li, you don't need to look."

At his explanation, Jiang Yanli chuckled but acquiesced to his words. "Of course, A-Xuan."

"I mean, it's not really shameless to watch since Second Young Master Lan's body is hidden by mist... so I suppose it's fine."

"Hey! What we see doesn't matter," said Ouyang Zizhen boldly. "The fact alone that Second Young Master Lan is there, dressed indecently, should be enough for all of you to turn away! So shameless, all of you! Are you really going to disrespect him like that?"

The juniors nodded in tandem, their respect for the romantic boy skyrocketing.

"Exactly! How shameless!"

"How dare you disrespect Hanguang-Jun!"

"Look away or I'll see to it myself that I gouge your eyes out!"

"...Hey, you four, what about Wei Wuxian? He's the one being shameless by peeking, not us!"

"Senior Wei is different!" All four exclaimed. Wei Wuxian determinedly nodded in agreement.

At the four junior disciples' words, Lan Wangji felt a warm feeling erupt in his heart.

Wei Wuxian noticed a small mark on Lan Wangji's chest, just below his collarbones: it was a bright red sun that stood out amongst the pale skin, undeniably the motif of the infamous Wen Clan. 'That brand mark!'

"Isn't that my Clan's branding mark?" murmured Wen Ruohan curiously. "I don't recall ever branding Lan Wangji... How could he have it on his chest? How curious... How very curious..."

Wei Wuxian was broken out of his trance by a sudden exclamation of outrage, "Who?!"

Lan Wangji grabbed his robe from the side of the pond and draped it over his body. With Bichen in hand, he sent forth a large blast of energy in Wei Wuxian's direction.

Wei Wuxian hid behind a rock and paled, sucking in a deep breath. 'Oh no..!' Thinking it best to run away as soon as possible, he began to sneak away but just as he turned, he crashed into a chest robed in white.

"Ow!" Jingyi yelped. "Who is it?!"

"What are you running for?! Walking too quickly is prohibited in Cloud Recess!"

"One moment he's loud, and the next he's a proper disciple who recites the rules loyally! Which one is it?"

Wei Wuxian smirked to himself, another shameless idea coming to fruition. 'Here's a chance! Now I can be kicked out of the mountain!'

Jiang Wanyin was suffering from second hand embarrassment and currently had his face in his hands. "Stop... Please stop..."

Many could only watch him in pity, shaking their heads as they held the very same thoughts deep at heart.

'Wei Wuxian, you are really so unbelievable!'

Wei Wuxian's demeanour faltered and he frantically waved his hands in denial. "I didn't see anything! I didn't see anything at all! I definitely wasn't here to peep at Hanguang-Jun bathe!"

"What?! Watching Hanguang-Jun bathe?!"

Lan Jingyi glowered as he roughly trapped Wei Wuxian by the collar. "You lunatic! I-I- Is this something you can peep at?!"

Wei Wuxian tried to stop himself from laughing and forced himself to turn red. "I didn't see at all how Hanguang-Jun looked without his clothes on!"

The Lans paled, "..."

The viewers paled, "..."

Lan Jingyi began to yell rather loudly, and Wei Wuxian squeaked in fright, quickly covering his face with his hands. "That is too specific for you to be innocent! Still saying that you did not, then what are you doing, sneaking around here?! Look at you! You should be ashamed of yourself and no longer dare not show your face to others!"

Lan Jingyi lowered his head with shame. "Sorry Senior Wei... I was really rude to you."

"It's all right," said Wei Wuxian with a warm smile. "You were only protecting Lan Zhan's modesty. In fact, I'm glad you reacted like that. You're a really good kid, Jingyi."

Lan Jingyi's cheeks lightly dusted with pink, a reaction only further noticed by other disciples when Jin Ling doubled over in laughter, cackling as he pointed it out to all.

Throughout the commotion, Lan Xichen lightly patted his Uncle on the back. "Uncle, you have tried your best..."

Wei Wuxian groaned a sound of annoyance. "Don't be so loud, won't you? Noise is prohibited in Cloud Recess."

Lan Jingyi glanced up to where Lan Wangji was approaching them, now properly dressed with his many sophisticated blue and white layers. "Ah, Hanguang-Jun!"

Not once did his gaze wander from Wei Wuxian.

Lan Jingyi once again turned his attention to Wei Wuxian. "Hanguang-Jun, Mo Xuanyu is really outrageous. You originally took him back in consideration of his help at Mo Village, yet he... he..."

Wei Wuxian peeked at Lan Wangji through his fingers, chanting in his head. '*Kick me out! Kick me out!*'

Lan Wangji suddenly emitted an atmosphere of solemnity. Upon noticing it, Wei Wuxian shifted so he faced his husband and gently took his cheeks in his hands. "Lan Zhan, look at me."

"Mn."

"I'm so sorry for everything back then. I- I didn't know, and I... I wasn't thinking!" he quickly rambled. "But I just want you to know that if I had known, I promise I-"

Lan Wangji gently shushed him and took both of his hands in his own, gently pulling them down and locking their fingers together. "Wei Ying doesn't need to explain himself," he said softly. "I understand."

"But Lan Zhan, you just... you seemed really upset, I just want to apologise... I never realised how that must have been to you. I kept trying to leave without considering-"

"Wei Ying," Lan Wangji interjected. "Stop. I know. I won't deny that it hurt," ("I really am sorry—") "but I want you to know that I understand. You were scared. All that matters now is the present."

"Well said, Lan Wangji," said Wen Ruohan approvingly. "A-Qing, you really befriended some good lads."

"I did," Wen Qing murmured fondly.

Lan Wangji put Bichen back into its sheath and played a hand on Wei Wuxian's shoulder. "Leave," he said. He then grabbed Wei Wuxian by the collar and pulled him away from the group of bewildered Lans.

When they reached the Jingshi, Lan Wangji pushed open the doors and threw Wei Wuxian onto the bed in the side room.

“Lan Wangji!” Jiang Wanyin exclaimed, his hands already covering his eyes.

“Stop being so dramatic,” Jin Zixuan murmured. “He’s just being courteous and giving Wei Wuxian some place to sleep.”

Wei Wuxian sat up slightly and leaned his head on one hand. 'Since when has the Lan Sect been so lenient towards something as shameless as peeking at one of its most distinguished cultivators bathe?! How could they tolerate this?!"

And then Lan Wangji began to strip off his outer robes, preparing himself for the night.

Wei Wuxian narrowed his eyes curiously. '*What if I strike while the iron is hot and disgust him some more..*'

He quickly sat up with a flirtatious smile. “Lan- Ouch!” But just as he spoke, he collided into a hard chest.

Lan Wangji towered over him, looking totally undone as he was dressed in only his inner robes. His hair was loose, and the thin white material exposed some of the pale skin on his chest. The scene was strangely intimate in a way that sent flutters to Wei Wuxian’s chest.

'The brand mark, I also had one before I became the Yiling Patriarch... No matter the position or the shape, this one is exactly the same as the one I used to have... But why?'

“The exact same place and the exact same brand,” Jiang Wanyin murmured thoughtfully. “Isn’t that ironic?”

Nie Huaisang idly fanned himself, his expression unreadable. “Really ironic...”

Wei Ying raised his head slightly. 'Lan Wangji made his name at a young age and people have been speaking very highly of him. Just what an unforgivable mistake did he make for him to be punished so harshly?'

Lan Wangji silently turned away, his face not visibly portraying his thoughts. "You will be sleeping here." And then he walked through the Jingshi's doors, once again leaving Wei Wuxian alone to his devices.

'But now, no matter what I did, Lan Wangji can tolerate everything, how strange. In the past, no matter what I did, Lan Wangji couldn't tolerate anything.'

“Ah!” Wei Wuxian fell back onto the bed with a satisfied exhale. He stared at the ceiling thoughtfully while contemplating. “Would he be asleep already?”

'The lights inside Lan Wangji's inner bedchamber are still on.'

"Oh no, what's he going to do *this time*?"

Wei Wuxian pried himself off of the bed and snuck into the room where Lan Wangji resided. 'The token of passage is on him. Maybe I'll be able to find it?'

He crept up the bed and past Lan Wangji's sleeping figure, his hands raised to search the man's robes—

Lan Wangji's eyes blinked open.

"...oh dear."

"The second hand embarrassment though..."

Wei Wuxian immediately retracted his hand. 'He's not asleep!'

'... *Oh well, I'll just go through with it.*'

He gently lifted the blanket off of Lan Wangji's body, 'I remember him hating physical contact. Back then, if I touched him, I could be thrown into the air.'

Wei Wuxian placed his hands on either side of Lan Wangji's head, now seated atop him. 'Now he'll definitely kick me out, won't he?!"

Jin Ling turned away. "I really don't need to see this shameless display."

"I agree," said Jin Zixuan calmly. "A-Ling, you really don't need to see this."

Lan Wangji indifferently stared at him. "Get down."

"No." Wei Wuxian smirked as he brought his face closer to Lan Wangji's. They were so close that he could feel the man's warm breath against his lips. "If you let me sleep here, you should've known that something like this would happen."

Lan Wangji murmured, "Are you sure this is what you want?"

Wei Wuxian paused. 'For some reason, I feel like I should think twice before I answer this question.'

Before he could reply, Lan Wangji abruptly wrapped an arm around Wei Wuxian's waist and pressed a pressure point. In a matter of moments, Wei Wuxian had slumped onto Lan Wangji, now as still as the man beneath him. 'I can't control my body..'

"Then stay like this for the rest of the night," said Lan Wangji calmly.

Wei Wuxian paled, 'Just what's happened to Lan Zhan during these years? How did he become like this? Is this still the Lan Zhan from back then?! He's the one who's had his body possessed, isn't he?!"

Lan Wangji suddenly sat up slightly and Wei Wuxian couldn't help but smirk at the action. 'He finally can't stand it any longer?!"

With a wave of his hands, the lights went out.

"Sleep," He sat back down and pulled the covers over both him and Wei Wuxian. After a while, they both shut their eyes, fatigue finally overtaking, and slept.

The screen gradually faded into a great heap of black.

Wei Wuxian's self-proclaimed fan group were busy gushing about that and the other, while others discussed what they had just witnessed with much bitterness.

"Why, exactly, do we need to see this?"

"It's just Wei Wuxian acting all chummy with his husband!"

"Exactly! What's the point? What about us single people?!"

"Of course!" said Wei Wuxian brightly. "Lan Zhan is just the best, isn't he? I love you so much, husband."

"No. Wei Ying is the best," murmured Lan Wangji, slinging an arm around his lover's waist.
"Love you too."

There were many sighs made by the people watching the sweet interaction.

"They're clearly pouring salt on our wounds!"

"What blatant dog food!"

"My Mum still cooks my food..."

"I haven't even held hands with anyone yet..."

"They're really too much!"

Chapter End Notes

Next Chapter: The flashback!!

Cloud Recess II - The Past

Chapter Notes

I'm so sorry this chapter is, like, almost 9K words long. I got a bit carried away, as you have probably already guessed.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Amongst the murmurs of discussion and curious exclamations of surprise, in a certain corner of the room stood everyone's favourite villain: Jin Guangyao. He had his arms crossed in a relaxed manner, his chin was raised in a show of the utmost confidence and his demeanour was poised; there wasn't a single tell-tale sign of distress or nervousness emitted from him.

It was this noble sight that had Su Minshan's lips curling into a smirk, his faithfulness for the man not yet deserted, for Jin Guangyao was someone he could confidently say he respected over any cultivator. "Clan Leader, are you waiting for them to let down their guards before you finally act? So smart! As expected of Clan Leader! Nie Huaisang, that cunning little fool —he dared to brazenly scheme against you! He deserves to die a thousand deaths!"

"Minshan, Da-Ge is back. And this time, he is even more guarded, for he knows of my schemes," said Jin Guangyao, and he sounded amused. "I won't be able to do anything to them. Not now that I have been villainised by the world."

He uncrossed his arms and gently placed a hand on Su Minshan's arm, looking distantly somewhere above his shoulder. "All I wanted was to unite the cultivation world and to prove myself... to prove that even a bastard like me could flourish with success. And how is it *my* fault there were so many obstacles blocking my path? How is it *my* fault that I was born out of wealth? How is it *my* fault that Da-Ge persisted to stand in my way?!"

The sympathetic speech had Su Minshan's lips trembling in both fury for the cultivation world's injustices and sympathy for Jin Guangyao's pitiful history. "Don't worry, Clan Leader. I will definitely find a way for us to regain our former glory!"

"Thank you Minshan," said Jin Guangyao softly. He smiled. "You really are the only one on my side."

"Of course, Clan Leader," Su Minshan stuttered, his cheeks embarrassingly flushing red at the praise.

At the same time, Lan Jingyi had somehow pushed past the masses of people (who had respectfully parted for him to make way for a path) and had once again reached the platform. The stone steps were intricately carved, and looked far more pristine and stable than any part of the cave. He idly scratched his head in confusion, not quite sure what to do next to get

everything to continue. Did he even *want to*? Although, unless they got through all of these trials, he couldn't quite picture *anyone* managing to ever escape this mysterious place.

"You know," he said idly. "It's kinda surreal knowing I resurrected these people, an accident though it may have been. I sort of feel like a great immortal."

"An Immortal? *You?*" came a not-quite-yelling yet certainly chastising voice. Jin Ling joined Lan Jingyi on the platform and pulled at his ear, erupting a yelp of pain from the Lan's chest. "Keep dreaming. If you ever became an immortal, you'd be cast out of heaven within a stick of incense!" [1]

Ouyang Zizhen huffed in exasperation. "A stick of incense?" he said incredulously. "That's extraordinary! Knowing him, it wouldn't have even burnt out half way!"

"Haha, very funny, you guys," said Lan Jingyi, and he wasn't amused. "I am a very responsible adult, thank you very much. What do you mean within a stick of incense? Matter of fact, that's how long it would take them to fall-absolutely-in *love* with me!" he nodded in Wei Wuxian's direction. "Right, Senior Wei?"

Wei Wuxian tilted his head in confusion, not quite hearing what the boy was saying. But he nonetheless smiled and even sent Lan Jingyi an encouraging nod, for the junior was being very responsible, taking it upon himself to control the tricky-looking platform! What a good child!

"Yes, you're just *so* responsible that you've just left Sizhui depressed and crying *by himself* over there!" exclaimed Ouyang Zizhen. Jin Ling sent him a look of confusion.

"What?!" Lan Jingyi gasped, glancing around for any sign of Lan Sizhui. "He's crying? Why didn't you tell me sooner?" And he zoomed off in a matter of minutes, yelling, "Sizhui!" as he rushed past the throng of cultivators.

"*Crying*? What was that about?" Jin Ling murmured, peering at the platform curiously. "Why'd you say that? I was just with Sizhui and he was completely fine."

"Of course I was lying," said Ouyang Zizhen with a small smirk. "But since Jingyi isn't here anymore, I suppose the only one suitable for controlling this thing is *me*."

"You—" Jin Ling spluttered. "So you sent him away just so you could control everything? So childish!"

"Well, say what you want," Ouyang Zizhen curiously looked at the options, humming a song to himself to decide which one to pick. The last note he sang ended on **[Yi Quartet]**, and so he decisively selected it, which opened up another window of options.

[Character one] [Character two] [Character three] [Character four]

"Wei-Wu-Xian," he said, his finger hovering over one of the numbers at each syllable. "Lan-Wang-Ji." His finger ended on **[Character two]**, and so he quickly selected it. Suddenly, a blinding white light erupted from the platform, clouding his vision in its entirety.

When it finally faded, a tall figure in dressed black adornments stepped forwards. They carried a sword on their back and from amongst the dark silhouette of elegant, drifting sleeves, Ouyang Zizhen could make out the shape of a horsetail whisk carried in the crease of their arm.

The man stepped out of the shadows, and Ouyang Zizhen could finally commit his features to detail: he was very handsome, indeed, with a perfect jawline and thin, night-like eyes. He also undoubtedly had some deep trauma beneath that handsome façade! How intriguing!

“Where am I?” said the man curiously as he glanced around. Even more strangely, the moment his eyes drifted to a certain place on his sash (Zizhen found that funny, after all, nothing was there!) his lips tightened and he seemed more guarded. And then he looked at Zizhen. “It’s you.”

“Er, what?” Ouyang Zizhen must have been hearing things. After all—he had never met this man! And being so handsome, there was no way he would have forgotten! But then again, did so many people in the world look like Zizhen?

“Do you know where we are?” The handsome man glanced around once more, his hands unconsciously tracing the fine hairs of his horsetail whip. “I recall wandering... I still haven’t found any answers. But with this, I was able to pay some respect to him.”

Ouyang Zizhen short-circulated. Just what nonsense was this man spouting? Why was he talking to Zizhen so coldly, yet with a short dismissal like they were tied acquaintances? Was he just mental?

But despite his internal conflict and long scriptures of screaming monologue, Ouyang Zizhen politely (and coolly) coughed into his palm. “I am not sure myself, Xiansheng, although I—Hey!” But the mysterious, handsome (and mental?) man was already walking into the crowd of cultivators! How could he just *dismiss* Zizhen like that? How rude!

Meanwhile, in another part of the room, Wei Wuxian was quietly murmuring to Lan Wangji with their sweet A-Yuan seated comfortably beside them. With it being so comfortable and familial, he decided he liked it and they should therefore cuddle up more!

“Sizhui!” came an exasperated yell. Lan Jingyi was rushing to them, his clothes unruffled and hair in disarray like he’d just been flying his sword. He looked at Sizhui with no small amount of distress. “Sizhui! Zizhen, he- he said you were crying! Are you okay?!”

Lan Sizhui tilted his head curiously, wondering what his best friend was talking about. “I’m fine,” he said, and in a matter of seconds the bewilderment shifted to amusement. “He really said that to you? He must have been dishonest. Thank you for your concern though, Jingyi.”

“That little cockroach really tricked me,” Lan Jingyi murmured darkly. “The next time I see him, see if I’ll tolerate such cheek from him again—”

“Young Master Wei. Second Young Master Lan.”

Lan Jingyi looked up in confusion at the newcomer. “Who are you?”

“Song Lan!” exclaimed Wei Wuxian happily, standing to formally greet the man. “It’s good to see you! And you’re back to normal, that’s great!”

“It appears so,” said the man (apparently Song Lan?!?) with a resting coldness rivalling the great Hanguang-Jun. “Do you know why we’re here? I figured since this place reeks of Resentful Energy, you would know.”

“WAIT!” Lan Jingyi screeched. “*That’s* Song Lan?!”

“That’s right. Haven’t you met him?” said Wei Wuxian. “Jingyi, not even *my* memory is that bad.”

“Yeah, I met his corpse!” Lan Jingyi exclaimed incredulously. “Remember? The pale, lifeless skin? The weird creepy vein-things? The *dead* Song Lan?!”

“Oh,” said Wei Wuxian brightly. “He’s just so handsome, isn’t he? Hear that, Song Lan, you’re not recognisable now that you’re alive. Isn’t that just so kind of Jingyi to say?”

Song Lan looked at Lan Jingyi. Lan Jingyi looked at Hanguang-Jun, whose golden eyes were as sharp and cold as Bichen. *Oops, don’t make your husband jealous, Senior Wei!*

“This is really interesting,” said Wei Wuxian, and he was still smiling. “So some of the people who are still alive in our time didn’t come here with the rest of us, and are instead resurrected like they’re dead. Although you’re a fierce corpse, so that may just apply to you. Song Lan, where were you last? Were you close to the Burial Mounds or relatively far away?”

“I... I was investigating a case of fierce corpses far in the south. I would say it would take weeks of travel to reach the Burial Mounds.”

“This begs the question: Was there a certain radius of which people were brought here? You were far away, so you didn’t come here with us. But you are also dead, therefore you’ve been included in the people being brought back to life. How curious... Very curious...”

“I’m alive again,” Song Lan held out his palm and stared at it almost guiltily. “Young Master Wei, I noticed Shuanghua isn’t with me. However, seeing you here, completely at ease, temporarily relieved my worry. I have never been to the Burial Mounds, and my senses had dulled during my time as a fierce corpse. Therefore, I apologise if I am asking too much of you.”

“Look,” said Wei Wuxian, gesturing to Jiang Yanli, who was giggling as she pulled at Jin Ling’s cheeks. Jin Zixuan watched them from the side with a content smile on his face.

Song Lan’s widened. “I believe... that is Maiden Jiang?”

“Correct,” Wei Wuxian softly smiled, wishing to pat the man on the shoulder yet both understanding and respecting Song Lan’s aversion to touch. “No one knows why. I also don’t know why. But some believe it is the work of Immortals.”

“Immortals,” Song Lan’s hand drifted to his eyes before he caught himself and snapped it back to his side. “I understand. Young Master Wei, may I ask one last thing?”

“Ask away.”

“Is this... permanent?”

But before Wei Wuxian could reply, large text appeared on the screen. [Episode Three (第三集)]

“Thank you for speaking with me, Song Lan. It’s great to have you back,” Wei Wuxian said with a smile. “But you’ll want to sit down for this strange... *comedic theatre performance of memories*, shall we say.”

The black dissipated like smoke, leaving a burst of colour in its wake: The screen firstly showed Wei Wuxian’s hair, curling and flapping in the wind as if swept along by the breeze. He was running considerably fast, zooming across the large area faster than one could blink, and he took multiple broad steps with every pant exhaled. Jiang Wanyin was attempting to make chase, although was evidently unsuccessful, for Wei Wuxian managed to speed ahead immediately.

“That is...” a junior Lan disciple murmured. “Isn’t that Cloud Recess?”

Many of the disciples seated near them nodded in agreement, murmuring to one another with both intrigue and confusion.

“But... it doesn’t really look like Cloud Recess at the same time.”

“Exactly! Why is the Wall of Discipline so small? It’s a scandal! Simply outrageous!”

‘*Xiao-Didi, you call that small?!’ Many thought with no small amount of exasperation. ‘Are we looking at the same thing here? What part of that wall is ‘small’?!’*

“Perhaps,” said Nie Huaisang quietly, gently tapping the closed wood of his fan to his chin in short intervals. “This is showing the past. After all, the only time Wei-Xiong ever visited Cloud Recess in his original body was the guest conference in Gusu. That was decades ago.”

“I always knew he wasn’t dumb,” a young female murmured in what sounded like an ‘i-told-you-so’ tone.

“Who said he was?” said another, gesturing to the Sect Leader. “Look at him. What dumb person would be able to have that calculating look in his eyes?”

“Exactly! I always saw through him!”

Really, Wei Wuxian wanted to say. *Really?*

“Although...” Nie Huaisang snapped open his fan and nervously glanced at Nie Mingjue. “That makes so much sense, Da-Ge! You’re so smart!” Nie Mingjue merely rolled his eyes fondly.

“Whoever conjured that thought, though, that does make sense. I suppose this really is *Wei Wuxian*...”

“Wait,” said Ouyang Zizhen suddenly. “If that’s Senior Wei, why is he so handsome? What about those hideous drawings of the... the *Yiling Patriarch* who would haunt me if I didn’t go to sleep early? Mum, what lies you told me!!”

“Don’t blame your Mum,” said Lan Jingyi. He looked at Lan Sizhui with accusatory eyes. “Instead, blame Sizhui! Remember, he grew up with Senior Wei!”

“Right! Sizhui, how could you keep this from us!”

“Exactly! I thought I was your favourite *shidi*!”

“Who cares about who knew how he used to look? After all, we’re all getting to see it now,” said a young woman dressed in red. She smirked. “I suppose this means we’ll get to see what kind of person Hanguang-Jun fell in love with as a teenager.”

“... San-Jie, I never took you for the type to like stuff like this...”

“What nonsense are you all spouting?!?” exclaimed Jin Zixun, outraged. “Who cares what some stupid cutsleeves have to say? What’s important is revealing all of Wei Wuxian’s evil deeds he committed during the war!”

“Shut up!” exclaimed one of the more bolder girls of the group.

“Exactly! Wei Wuxian and Lan Wangji’s relations are top priority!” said another. “Who cares about the war?!”

At her words, many people were flabbergasted. ‘*Who cares about the war*, she says? *Who cares about the war*?!’

Once they finally reached the entrance, Wei Wuxian abruptly came to a stop and leaned against a stone arched bridge to catch his breaths. Jiang Wanyin caught up moments later, too out of breath to speak and so he merely sent Wei Wuxian a glare that seemed to say, ‘What did you say before? Sorry, I was still trying to catch up with you to actually hear.’

“If you get up late again tomorrow, I definitely won’t wait for you,” he said exasperatedly.

“I was only just late,” said Wei Wuxian petulantly, idly fiddling with the end of his ponytail. “The worst punishment I can get is to stand in the corner!”

"And that, right there, is the exact mindset I advise you to *not* heed!" admonished Lan Qiren, gently stroking his goatee. He seemed to be sending Lan Jingyi quite a few dirty looks as he said this, and so the disciple cheekily stuck out his tongue in retaliation.

"Really responsible," snickered Jin Ling.

"Very," agreed Ouyang Zizhen sarcastically.

Jin Zixuan suddenly entered the view of the screen, two Jin disciples dutifully trailing behind him. Both Wei Wuxian and Jiang Wanyin saluted, the latter the only one to verbally announce a greeting. "Zixuan."

Jin Zixuan's face was placid as he did a mock bow in response, strutting along the path without glancing in their direction even once.

"Little Mistress, I suppose the attitude must be hereditary," said Lan Jingyi with a mocking raise of his eyebrow.

Jin Ling glowered at him. "Call me that one more time and I'll... I'll!"

"You'll do what?" Lan Jingyi snickered. "You'll tell Sect Leader Jiang? Sorry to burst your bubble, Little Mistress, but Sect Leader Jiang can't save you your face."

"I'll..." Jin Ling's cheeks were burning an angry red and he suddenly blurted, "I'll tell my Dad!" Jin Zixuan's eyes widened. "You know, my Dad is really strong! He'll beat you up with just a raise of his hand! See if you'll ever disrespect me ever again!"

And then, just as he processed his words, his face burned even redder and he slightly sunk into himself. Lan Jingyi's laughs certainly didn't help with his embarrassment.

"A-Ling," said Jin Zixuan softly. Jiang Yanli shared a smile with him and they both reached forward to coax Jin Ling into a hug.

"He's becoming more and more presentable," Wei Wuxian murmured, sending Jin Zixuan's back a rude hand gesture as he passed them.

"Stop that," admonished Jiang Wanyin. "The Jin Clan of Lanling—as rich as the princes. He's the heir of the Jin Clan. He has to be presentable."

"Hm..." said Wei Wuxian, thoughtfully stroking his chin. Then a smile suddenly pulled at his lips.

"Oh dear."

"Mother Baoshan, dear great Immortals, whatever mischief he's up to, please stop him."

As soon as Jiang Wanyin caught sight of his cheeky smile, he quickly nudged Wei Wuxian in the side, sending him toppling forwards. "Stop! Don't get any bad ideas. I'm warning you. No matter what, Jin Zixuan is still my sister's fiancé. He'll be family one day. You will have to bear with it."

"You!" Jin Zixuan lamented. "*Bear with it?* I wasn't *that* bad, was I?"

"I thought you were a pompous peacock," said Jiang Wanyin.

"Positively abysmal," said Wei Wuxian brightly.

"I know, I know!" said Wei Wuxian, quickly patting down his robes.

"You'll say that," Jiang Wanyin once again rolled his eyes. "But everything went straight through one ear and out the other, didn't it?"

"You know me so well, Cheng Cheng," said Wei Wuxian cheekily.

As they both approached the majestic white building, Wei Wuxian raised an eyebrow. "The Orchid Room?"

"The name's not bad, but the old man who teaches is so stubborn," commented Jiang Wanyin. "But he's extraordinary indeed. However useless one may be, he can turn them into presentable men."

Seeing this comment aimed at him, Wei Wuxian tutted and turned to face Jiang Wanyin, gesturing to his own robes from head to toe. "Don't I look proper enough right now?"

"You do *look* it," said Jin Ling as matter-of-fact. "But you sure don't *act* it."

"Really, you'd think he'd learn a thing or two from Second Young Master Lan," said Old Liu with a sigh. "I suppose some people really are irredeemable."

"I don't know," said Lan Jingyi thoughtfully. "I like him this way."

"Only because you're cut from the same cloth, you little devil!"

Nie Huaisang, who had also been trepidatiously lingering outside the tall, majestic gates, noticed the pair of bickering brothers and eagerly waved them over. "Jiang-Xiong! Wei-Xiong!"

Jiang Wanyin spared the boy a glance before once again admonishing Wei Wuxian, "You are definitely going to be that one spot staining his whole teaching career."

"More like Lan Wangji's," boldly said a young Jiang disciple. At the many looks they received, they curled into themselves self consciously. "Sorry."

"Isn't that just accurate?" Yu Ziyuan's lips curled into a sneer. "We ought to have left him at Gusu to burden Lan Qiren with. Maybe, had he stayed until they actually reformed him into a somewhat decent person, he wouldn't have come back to our home and got our sect massacred."

"My Lady," said Jiang Fengmian carefully. "Everything has gone and passed now, I don't think it's appropriate to bring such old times to the surface."

"Exactly, everything has gone and passed, hasn't it, Fengmian?!" roared Yu Ziyuan. "Everything has gone and passed—you died, I died, our *daughter* died, *Zixuan* died! All because of that *mistake* sitting over there! He never should have joined the sect!"

Jiang Fengmian opened his mouth to speak, only to notice plenty of nosy, gossiping stares. He shot Yu Ziyuan a look, who glanced around at the crowd disdainfully before sitting back down.

The disciple standing behind Nie Huaisang gasped at the sight of Wei Wuxian. "Isn't that Wei Wuxian? He's only a disciple of the Jiang Clan, how come he is able to study here at Gusu?"

"Wei-Xiong's parents were friends of Sect Leader Jiang, who treated him like his own," explained Nie Huaisang.

"Wei Wuxian's parents were friends with Jiang Fengmian? Why didn't I know about this?"

"But I heard he's Jiang Cheng's bastard brother. After all, Jiang Fengmian never denied Wei Wuxian being his son..."

"But it's exactly that—he didn't deny it. How is that confirmation?"

"Maybe we were wrong..."

'Of course you were wrong!' Wei Wuxian wanted to say, but he nonetheless held in all of his thoughts, conscious of the ears listening in. 'As soon as I'm taken in by the Jiang Sect, I'm labelled as Jiang Fengmian's son. What about my parents? Did you all forget about their glory and achievements? Was the praise you gave them just a farce?'

Despite the confusion and uncertainty among the viewers, one thing was certain — Wei Wuxian's past was shrouded in mystery, and only time would reveal its true secrets.

The disciple made a sound of understanding. "Oh, I see. No wonder Jiang Cheng and Wei Wuxian get along so well. They're like brothers!"

Once the pair had finally caught up with them, Nie Huaisang greeted once again, "Jiang-Xiong! Wuxian-Xiong! You must think Gusu is a boring place."

Lan Qiren's face contorted into an expression resembling that of a cat whose tail had just been stepped on.

"Wouldn't say it's too boring," said Wei Wuxian as he pulled his arms above his head and stretched. "We just got up too early."

Nie Huaisang looked at him curiously and he quickly snapped open his bamboo fan. "We awaken at 5AM here, it's not that bad right? When did you two get up?"

"5AM?" murmured a Jiang disciple. "That's way too early!"

"Exactly! I'd just be *going* to sleep right about then!"

"Is this why the Lans are so stuck up? Because they don't sleep?"

"I'm *never* going to Gusu in this lifetime, that's for sure!"

Jiang Cheng pointed a finger at Wei Wuxian, who glanced back at him innocently, and then he looked at Nie Huaisang as if confirming the question was aimed at Wei Wuxian. "Him? He rises at nine and sleeps at one. After he wakes up, he doesn't meditate or practise the sword. Instead, he fools around in the water, picks lotus seed pods, and hunts for pheasants."

Wei Wuxian grinned proudly. "I'm the best at hunting pheasants!"

His mind made up, Nie Huaisang determinedly snapped shut his fan. "Next year I'll go to Yunmeng to study! Nobody can stop me!"

"Huaisang," said Nie Mingjue, prying a whining Nie Huaisang's fan away. "I'm certain I can stop you—" he swiftly slapped him on the head with it. "—or did you not think I would dare to break your legs?!"

"Da-Ge, be careful with that, it's really—" Nie Huaisang let out a wild shriek at the sight of the snapped and splintered remains of his fan. "*Delicate!* Da-Ge, my fan, you...!"

Nie Mingjue glanced at the fan guiltily. "...Sorry, Huaisang."

"*Sorry won't cut it! Da-Ge, do you understand the lengths I went through to get that? No, you don't because you're really, really—*" he paused as if unsure of what to say next. "*Stupid,*

Da-Ge! You're stupid and silly!"

"You—" Nie Mingjue was speechless, as were a few others in the crowd. Who knew Nie Huaisang could scold his brother like that? What a new side they'd seen of the Sect Leader today!

The disciple patted Nie Huaisang on the shoulder in pity. "Nobody will stop you. It's just that your brother will break your legs."

Wei Wuxian chuckled, his silver eyes adopting a calculating, mischievous look.
"Honestly, you can still have fun in Gusu."

"Wei Wuxian is always so positive even when less... *favourable* things occur. It is truly admirable!"

"But I dread to think what he finds *fun* in a place like Gusu. I don't trust him!"

Many "+1"s immediately followed.

Nie Huaisang sauntered over to him. "Fun? Are you kidding me, Wei-Xiong? A piece of sincere advice for you, Cloud Recess does not tolerate misbehaviour." He idly waved his hand. "During your time in Gusu, you must remember not to provoke a certain person."

Wei Wuxian raised an eyebrow curiously. "Who? Lan Qiren?"

Lan Qiren scoffed, not appreciating the way they were uncouthly gossiping. "Well he definitely failed."

Nie Huaisang shook his head in response. "Not that old man. The one you should watch out for is his favourite student, one of the Lan brothers. He's really cold and people are even too scared to speak his courtesy name! It's—"

"...It's?" Wei Wuxian prompted.

"It's—" Nie Huaisang pursed his lips. He discreetly glanced around them and slowly leaned in to whisper into Wei Wuxian's ear. "Lan..." he swallowed. "Lan Wangji."

"Haha, he's so scared to say Hanguang-Jun's name," snickered Lan Jingyi. "How ridiculous. It's just a name!"

"Need I remind you of that time we met that ghost?" drawled Jin Ling, to Lan Jingyi's horror.
"Exactly. A cultivator being scared of ghosts. *That's* ridiculous."

"You did not just go there, Jin Ling!"

"I think I just did," said Jin Ling challengingly. "And that's *Jin-Zongzhu* to you."

"Hey! I'm your friend! Why do I have to call you such a respectful title?"

"Even more reason, then."

Wei Wuxian hummed quietly to himself as he followed Nie Huaisang into the Orchid Room. "Lan Wangji?"

Nie Huaisang quickly nodded trepidatiously. "Yes! He's in charge of discipline. Everyone here fears him."

"A social butterfly and a feared ice beauty — how romantic! They are like ice and fire, the sun and the moon; they were made for each other!"

"Yes, yes!" others eagerly agreed.

Nie Huaisang sighed wistfully. "Good thing is, he likes meditating alone, so we don't see him around often—" but as soon as he turned his head, a screech of pure terror abruptly escaped his lips. Wei Wuxian frowned as he followed his gaze.

Basking in the sun's long rays of light, Lan Wangji was seated by the window and idly staring into the wilderness. His long, dark locks of hair fluttered as if being dragged along by the breeze and intertwined with these long strips of ebony was a thin white ribbon of the Lan Clan.

"What a beautiful person," said a young female cultivator dazedly.

"I'm beginning to question whether I like girls or if I'm a cutsleeve..."

"I need to look away before I'm bewitched."

"Exactly," said Wei Wuxian, not at all pleased that people were taking an interest in his husband. "He's beautiful. And he's *my* husband."

"Stop rubbing it in, Yiling Patriarch. That's just cruel!"

Wei Wuxian pulled a face. "E-Eh?! How is it *him* ..?!"

Lan Wangji turned around, then, and his piercing golden eyes stared malicious, hateful holes into Wei Wuxian, who violently shuddered at the sheer ferocity in them.

"That glare... It's *full* of hatred!!"

"Lan Wangji!" scolded another. "Why are you glaring at your husband? What did he do to you?!"

"Sorry Wei Ying," said Lan Wangji apologetically. "I... I really regret treating you like that in the past. From now on, if only you would allow me to make it up to you..."

"It's okay, Er-Gege," Wei Wuxian drawled, drawing small circles on the cloth of Lan Wangji's chest. He looked up at his husband and blinked innocently. "After all, I rather like that."

"You!" Jiang Wanyin was on the verge of joining Lan Qiren in the realm of unconsciousness after fainting from Wei Wuxian's shameless nature!

Nie Huaisang was initially shaking in fear, desperately hiding himself behind his fan. However, as time prolonged and he further observed the pair, his shoulders relaxed as he seemed to come to a conclusion.

He narrowed his eyes at the pair, using his closed fan to draw a line between the staring battle between Wei Wuxian and Lan Wangji: the former had an unreadable face, save for the fury he seemed to be emitting, while the latter was frozen in shock – and was that recognition?

"Wait," said Wen Ruohan. "Could this be 'love at first sight? I've heard people go into a daze — a trance of sorts. Does this mean they fell for one another so easily? How boring! I enjoy a good slow burn."

"I doubt that," said one of the bolder girls. "Lan Wangji looks like he wants to lop Wei Wuxian's head off right where he's standing. That's hardly *love at first sight*."

"But he always looks like that, doesn't he?" Jiang Wanyin murmured.

"Only to you, Uncle," said Jin Ling as-matter-of-fact.

Wei Wuxian loudly huffed, petulantly turning away from the cold, livid eyes.

Nie Huaisang snapped open his fan and raised it until it covered half of his face. "Wei-Xiong, have you done something wrong?"

"How'd he know?!" Lan Jingyi exclaimed, dumbfounded.

"How could he *not*?" scoffed Jiang Wanyin. "Wei Wuxian always has a certain attraction for trouble. He always gets the same *look* when he's either *thinking* of causing some sort of trouble or already *has*. And whenever I see it, it's usually a bit of both, mind you."

"You sure know him well, Sect Leader Jiang," murmured Ouyang Zizhen. "Really well..."

"Haha..." Wei Wuxian nervously chuckled as he recalled and retold what had happened the previous night. "Well..."

The screen switched to a dark night, where Lan Wangji was standing atop a rooftop opposite Wei Wuxian, who was sitting on the pinnacle and looking very displeased.

"You are not allowed in until 7AM tomorrow. Get out," said Lan Wangji coldly.

"Emperor's smile!" Wei Wuxian offered a jar to Lan Wangji, the bright full moon shining rays onto both the alcohol container and Wei Wuxian's bright smile. "I'll give you a jar. In return, you must not tell a soul I was ever here. Deal?"

Upon receiving only silence from the cold man, Wei Wuxian grinned. "Aiyo, Put on a smile, you'll look much cuter!"

"He called Lan Wangji cute," said Wen Ruohan, majestically stroking a goatee that was not quite there. "Definitely love at first sight. I suppose that other time must have been *love at second sight*."

The girls immediately began to voice their delight at his words. "That's right! That's exactly it!"

Lan Wangji frowned in disapproval. "Alcohol is forbidden in Cloud Recess."

Wei Wuxian glanced at him, and then down at the jars in his hand with a resigned sigh. "What exactly is *not* forbidden here?!"

Not wanting to humour Wei Wuxian, Lan Wangji coldly turned away. "It is clearly written on the wall of discipline. Go read it yourself."

"Your family rules are more than 3,000," said Wei Wuxian, resting against a tree branch and dismissively waving his hand. "Who'd read all that?"

"Nobody, really."

"Not even the *Lans* are that insane! Well, I suppose the main family are, judging by Lan Wangji's reaction..."

Lan Wangji continued to glower at him, to which Wei Wuxian was forced to reluctantly yield. "Uh... Alright, alright. I won't go in," and he then proceeded to tear off the lid of one jar with his teeth, holding the other securely under his arm. "I'm not inside, so I can drink here, right?"

"..."

"..."

"..."

"You wouldn't *dare* –"

“Loopholes,” said Lan Jingyi, grinning at the on-screen Wei Wuxian with a sort of kindred smugness.

Wei Wuxian lifted the jar and leaned back as he gulped down the alcohol. Rivers of it ran down his chin and onto his neck, but he never made an attempt to wipe it away, instead basking in the sight of Lan Wangji’s furious expression.

"I admit, the Yiling Patriarch looked really handsome."

"What idiot spread the rumours around saying that he was ugly?! Whoever said that was clearly just jealous!"

"It's not that Mo Xuanyu's appearance isn't nice... He just looks more... let's say *beautiful* rather than handsome. Mo Xuanyu is the kind of person who'd make a girl feel insecure about her looks. But Wei Wuxian is the kind of person who would make them insecure of their looks for the *other* reason."

As Lan Wangji watched Wei Wuxian carelessly violate numerous rules in just that act alone, his anger flared. Without a moment's hesitation, he unsheathed Bichen and lunged towards Wei Wuxian.

"Noooooo!! Don't attack your husband!!"

"It's dangerous! You might get hurt!"

"Don't aim at his face! I can't bear to see that!"

Wei Wuxian wiped his mouth with a satisfied exhale and jumped back to avoid the blade, throwing the jar of alcohol into the air during the process. The pair danced across the rooftop with light steps, Wei Wuxian avoiding Lan Wangji's blade while trying to protect the jar of liquor, and Lan Wangji performing a series of thrusts and parries, pushing Wei Wuxian into a corner, with nowhere to go for the watchtower was right behind him.

"This is so beautiful!"

"How exciting! We get to watch two incredibly strong cultivators fighting up close!"

"Hey, are there any painters here? Quickly, you need to paint this scene! I'll give you whatever you want!"

"I want a fan," said Nie Huaisang, slightly glowering at Wei Wuxian. He sighed. "But I would if I could! I don't have any of my art supplies with me! What a wasted opportunity!"

Lan Wangji cornered Wei Wuxian to a tree, this time, but Wei Wuxian wasn't ready to let him win just yet. Instead of yielding, he instead climbed onto the tree and used it as leverage to leap past Lan Wangji, his silver eyes colliding with Lan Wangji's golden ones in what appeared to be slow motion as he passed him.

Using the fabric binding on his wrists, he trapped the tip of Bichen's blade in a knot, making Lan Wangji pause for a moment, at a complete loss of what to do. But in only moments, he managed to string together a response and he thrust Bichen in the air, cutting the fabric and sending Wei Wuxian's jar of wine flying metres away. There was a resounding clash as it fell to the floor amongst their shared silence.

"Lan Zhan, you were really so cruel, destroying my Emperor's Smile like that!" said Wei Wuxian solemnly, pouting and crossing his arms at the mere memory.

"Will get some more," said Lan Wangji.

As if he'd anticipated this from the start, Wei Wuxian leapt up from his slouched position and smiled at Lan Wangji eagerly. "Hm? What was that, Er-Gege?"

"I will get Wei Ying as many jars of Emperor's Smile as he wants," corrected Lan Wangji.

"Yay! Lan Zhan, you're the *best!*"

The scene switched back to Nie Huaisang's dumbfounded face, his fan already having slipped from his grip. "In Cloud Recess, it is forbidden to go out at night, drink alcohol, or fight privately!" he wailed in despair, counting Wei Wuxian's many offences on his fingers. "You've already broken three rules!"

Wei Wuxian petulantly kicked a stray rock on the ground and murmured under his breath, "There are more rules here than ants...."

Nie Huaisang smoothly slipped away, his face still half hidden by the wood of his fan. At the same time, Jiang Wanyin placed an encouraging hand on Wei Wuxian's shoulder. "He's watching you. Good luck." and then he walked away, leaving Wei Wuxian alone to feel the pressure of Lan Wangji's fearsome gaze.

A chorus of laughter echoed within the room.

"They left him! Haha!"

"Poor Wei Wuxian!"

"Now that's what I call *a dramatic exit!*"

Wei Wuxian seated himself at the front row, his desk coincidentally beside Lan Wangji's. But no matter how much he stared or motioned towards the cold teenager, Lan Wangji's composed demeanour didn't falter once.

"Ahem," coughed Lan Qiren as he entered the room, holding a rolled-up scroll. "Is everyone here?"

The Lans instinctively straightened their backs at his entrance before abruptly recalling just *where* they were and exhaling a long sigh of relief.

Lan Qiren held one end of the scroll and let it unravel itself and glide across the room, revealing all of the 3,000 rules of Cloud Recess that were individually inscribed onto a thin piece of parchment paper. It stretched metres long, passing by all of the terrified Guest Disciples.

"*WHAT IS THAT ?!*" screeched many Jiang disciples at once.

Wei Wuxian felt a tremor of trepidation rush down his spine—he audibly swallowed and glanced at Lan Qiren fearfully, who was stroking his goatee in what Wei Wuxian thought to be smugly. "The 3,000 rules of GusuLan."

To everyone's terror, Lan Qiren began to read them out one by one. "No private fighting, no promiscuity, no killing inside the city—"

Wei Wuxian slouched onto his desk, leaning his face in one hand. He found his gaze wandering to Lan Wangji, who was seated with his back straight-

"I guess he didn't stay straight for long—" Ouyang Zizhen was silenced by his father's hand which, oddly familiarly, was smacking him squarely on the back of the head.

-and eyes glued to Lan Qiren, listening to each syllable, each word with the utmost attention.

Wei Wuxian could only stare in disbelief. '*How can he listen to something so boring?*'

"If you looked up the word 'proper', I'm certain Lan Wangji's face would be right next to it."

"And if you looked up 'stingy', I'm sure you'll see Lan Qiren—" began Ouyang Zizhen, followed by a yelp as his father once again smacked his head. "Actually, you'll definitely see my dad—" a smack. "Clan Leader Ouyang—" another smack. "*Ouyang-Zongzhu*, I tell you! *Ouyang-Zongzhu*!" another.

"-No smirking," Lan Qiren continued to drawl. "No sitting hunched over. No..."

Wei Wuxian jolted, snapping out of his daze when a loud smack of wood was heard. He glanced at Lan Qiren, who was currently glowering at him from the front of the room. "I am reciting the rules one by one because no one reads them. Since someone is still not paying attention, alright, I'll tell you something else."

"It's so obvious he's speaking about Uncle Wei," said Jin Ling blankly.

"Totally obvious," said Nie Huaisang with a slight nod.

"Exceptionally obvious," agreed Lan Sizhui.

"Immensely obvious," added Lan Jingyi.

"Totally... Exceptionally... immensely..." Ouyang Zizhen murmured to himself, counting the synonymous words on his fingers. "Ah, I know! Tremendously obv—"

They were, rather unfortunately, silenced by Jiang Wanyin's sharp words, "Stop! I don't care how wide your range of vocabulary is, just shut up for once! How many times must I tell you?!"

Wei Wuxian smirked into his palm, eyes sparkling with amusement. 'Is he talking about me?'

Sure enough, Lan Qiren's eyes sped to Wei Wuxian. "Wei Wuxian."

"Here!" Wei Wuxian raised his hand and dutifully waved at Lan Qiren, giggling at the tight expression on the old man's wrinkled face.

"What was the profession of the QingheNie Clan's ancestors?"

"Butcher," Wei Wuxian answered without pause.

"The heraldry of the LanlingJin Sect is a white peony; Which type of white peony is it?"

"Sparks Amidst Snow."

"Who was the first in the cultivation world to focus on the rise of their Clan rather than their Sect?"

"The founder of the QishanWen Sect, Wen Mao."

"How intelligent," said a Junior cultivator, their eyes sparkling in admiration. "It's no wonder he used to be the Jiang Sect's head disciple!"

"I even heard, once, that the Yiling Patriarch used to be *fourth* in the list of the most eligible bachelors! But no one talks about that these days. They're all for the 'evil, fearsome demon' hiding beneath one's bed."

"Eh? That's quite the accomplishment. Why haven't I heard of this?"

Lan Qiren's face seemed to pale, but his stern expression didn't waver once. "As a disciple of the YunmengJiang Sect, you should have long since been able to recall these things like the back of your hand. It is nothing to take pride in even if you answered them correctly."

"Nothing to take pride in? Knowing just that and able to answer it when put on the spot like that is quite amazing. Lan Qiren really expects too much!"

"Exactly!" said a young maiden. "Excuses, excuses! What's with people treating Wei Wuxian differently just because of his parents? First Yu Ziyuan, Jiang Fengmian, and now Lan Qiren! It's really too much! Whatever did Wei Wuxian do to you old cranky people to make you despise him like that?!"

Lan Qiren stroked his goatee in a slow, elegant manner. "Let me ask you again. There lived an executioner who lacked neither parents, wife, nor children. Before he died, he had executed over a hundred people. His death happened in public and, to punish him for his deeds, he was left on the streets for seven days. His resentful energy accumulated and he began to haunt the living. What should be done?"

Wei Wuxian paused this time, seemingly pondering over the answer in a great contrast to the quick, spit-fire way he'd been throwing Lan Qiren's questions back at him before.

Lan Qiren glanced at Nie Huaisang, who was hidden behind a book while chanting, "Don't pick me, don't pick me, don't pick me, don't pick me, don't pick me!!" He looked up from under the book but immediately darted back down after meeting Lan Qiren's eyes.

Lan Qiren smoothly turned to Lan Wangji, his expression smug in a way that told the viewers he had done this many times before. "Wangji, tell him what should be done."

Lan Wangji swiftly left his seat and politely cupped his hands into a bow. “First, liberate; Second, suppress; Third, obliterate. The initial approach is to utilise the gratitude of his relatives and grant his dying wish, setting free what he could not let go of. If this fails, suppress it. If the crimes committed were extreme and its energy of resentment does not dissipate, exterminate it completely. The cultivation world should precisely keep to this order of measure. No errors should be allowed.”

"That's the most I've heard Second Young Master Lan speak, even though he's repeating something you'd read in texts."

"You're right. The only time he says such long sentences is when talking to Wei Wuxian."

"Why just Wei Wuxian? I like his voice! He should talk more!"

Lan Qiren stroked his goatee and was quick to praise his nephew, "Not a single word was mistaken."

Wei Wuxian raised his hand. "I have a question."

"Speak."

"'Liberation' is supposed to come first but it's often impossible. 'Grant his dying wish' — But what if his dying wish is murder for revenge?"

"Hence suppression assists liberation. If necessary, obliteration follows," said Lan Wangji calmly.

"Such a waste." Wei Wuxian sighed. "It's not that I didn't know the answer, but I was thinking about a fourth path."

"Fourth path?"

'Oh dear ' Wei Wuxian thought. *'Well, there's no stopping my younger self's loud mouth now.'*

"Is he foreshadowing Mo Manor?" said Lan Sizhui, ever so observant. "The wish for revenge through murder... It's almost like he was preparing for the future. How curious."

"Because the executioner died in such a way, it's only natural that he turned into a fierce corpse. Since he executed one hundred people before he died—"

"I don't like where this is going..."

"Wei Wuxian, kindly shut up now. I dread to hear the rest."

Wei Wuxian blinked innocently. "—Why not dig up the graves of these people, excite their resentful energy, collect the one hundred heads, and use them to fight the ferocious corpse?"

Sect Leader Yao shot up from where he sat and pointed a furious, accusatory finger at Wei Wuxian. "You see! He truly is a demon! Even at such a young age, he's been thinking of killing us all and walking the dark path!"

"He's right!"

"Demon!"

"Monster!"

"You don't belong here!"

"Fiend!"

"Shame on you!"

And then silence.

"Why is it suddenly so silent?" Lan Jingyi murmured in bewilderment. Many people shifted their eyes to Lan Wangji, who had all but *silenced tens of people* in a matter of *a second!* How extraordinary!

Lan Wangji turned to Wei Wuxian, disbelief clearly visible in his expression. Jiang Wanyin facepalmed. The guest disciples gawked at his audacity, while Lan Qiren's face distorted in anger.

Lan Qiren slammed his hand on the desk. "How dare you! The essence of exorcising ghosts and annihilating demons is to liberate! Rather than thinking of ways to liberate, you intend on exciting their resentful energy! You reverse the natural order, ignore ethics and morality!"

"Yes! He's exactly right!"

"Listen to your elders!"

Wei Wuxian boredly picked up a lock of his hair and began to twirl it between his fingers listlessly. "Since when have any of you 'elders' truly acted like a teacher and have given us proper guidance?" His speech was lazy, but firm, as if it was a thought he'd held for a long time yet not one he'd ever said aloud.

The Juniors exchanged glances at once before they immediately erupted with a barrage of complaints and yells:

"Senior Wei is right! Shut up!"

"Stop talking about Senior Wei like that!"

"You hypocrites!"

"I'll-" Lan Jingyi paused. It wouldn't be good if he threw a number of threats at people in this situation, would it?

Wei Wuxian raised an eyebrow. "There are some things that can't be liberated no matter what, so why not make use of them? When Yu The Great tamed the flood, obstruction was the inferior method, while redirection was the superior. Suppression is the same as obstruction, so it isn't inferior-"

But despite his attempt at reasoning with the old man, Lan Qiren interjected him by throwing a book in his direction. Wei Wuxian quickly dodged it, but instead of flying past him and into the wall, it threw itself into an unsuspecting Nie Huaisang, hitting him squarely in the face. He stumbled back, half out of pain and half out of shock as he wailed and clutched his face, his fan lost somewhere on the floor.

"Poor Nie Huaisang," said the maiden who had been previously defending Wei Wuxian. In a stroke of irony, now she was defending Nie Huaisang. "How cruel of Lan Qiren, to throw a book at him at such a time! Is he just comedic relief or what?! He's next in line for the Nie Clan, spare him some face!"

"Hey, it's Sect Leader Nie to you," said another female cultivator who was seated beside her. "A-Yu, don't be so dramatic. Besides, I'm sure this is the reason why Sect Leader Nie always looks like he's got a book flattened on his face. I mean, look at him!"

"What's that supposed to mean?" Nie Huaisang murmured solemnly, absentmindedly rubbing his forehead.

Despite Lan Qiren's rebuttals, Wei Wuxian did not falter. "Spiritual energy is energy, Resentful energy is energy as well! Spiritual energy is stored in the dantian and its power is available for our use, so why can't we make use of it?!"

"*So why can't we make use of it?*" Jin Zixun repeated in a mocking tone. "I wonder *why* that is, Wei Wuxian. Aren't you supposed to be smart? Didn't you invent it? You even said it yourself! *Spiritual energy is energy that we already harness.* And what is resentful energy? Energy yes, but it's arguably the most harmful thing a cultivator could ever come in contact with! Of course we don't make use of it! Are you just thick or do I need to spell it out for you?"

"It's all a load of nonsense, but," said an older woman. "He has a point. I used to think this—" she looked at Jin Zixun unsurely. "- *Jin disciple* was about as smart as Wen Chao, but... he

really does have a point, doesn't he?"

"I suppose if you could control it, the effects wouldn't be damaging," added another. "After all, Wei Wuxian harnessed this power so flawlessly and wielded it like it was another limb! Of course it wasn't harming him! Controlling it must stop that!"

Lan Qiren was so furious that his pale and wrinkly face was becoming a startling angry red and he seemed to be visibly shaking. "Then let me ask you again! How can you ensure that the resentful energy follows your command and does not harm others?!"

"Hmm," Wei Wuxian put a hand to his chin thoughtfully before innocently tilting his head to the side. "I haven't thought of it yet."

"..."

"But you do," said Ouyang Zizhen to the silence. "You do find a way, Senior Wei. You make it follow your command and don't allow it to harm others. Therefore... I think you shouldn't listen to him! Actually, I really admire you—ow—Dad!! What was that for?! You're not allowed to hit your child!!"

"Oh I think I am, Zizhen! What son are you?!"

"Don't speak against your elders," said Lan Jingyi, always the pristine example of a Lan. "However, Lying is forbidden. Therefore, I must agree with him! Senior Wei, you're so amazing! Never change!"

"Kids," Wei Wuxian murmured with a large smile that was trepidatiously breaking through. "Thank you."

Alas, Lan Qiren was not done. Steam seemed to be leaving his ears as he threw yet another book at Wei Wuxian. "If you thought of it, the cultivation world would not allow your existence! Get out!"

"Okay, let's be fair here: that book was well deserved."

"Yes."

"It was certainly well deserved."

Wei Wuxian happily chuckled before respectfully cupping his hands together in a bow, in a great juxtaposition to his previously disrespectful attitude. "Goodbye!"

He seemed so joyous to be leaving the Orchid Room that some of the disciples sort of envied him — well, at least until Lan Qiren shouted for their attention ("don't look at

him! Do you want to join him in his punishment?!"').

'Wei Wuxian... he has really lost it...' they all thought.

"You.. You.." Lan Qiren pointed a trembling finger at him. "From now on, Wei Wuxian shall be reflecting on his faults for one month!"

All he got in response was a cheerful laugh.

"Wei Wuxian... he is really so carefree," said a Jin disciple. "Sometimes I wonder if this is even the Yiling Patriarch we're seeing. It's like he's possessed."

"You're right, he could have been possessed! And we must have just never noticed!"

"Did Lan Wangji know? Do you think that's why he protected the Yiling Patriarch in the past? He did not want an innocent—in terms of the mind—man to be killed? But he also didn't say anything because he would be accused of protecting an evil entity?"

"Wow! Hanguang-Jun is really so admirable!"

"Then.. That explains why Wei Wuxian gave up the sword. No cultivator would give up the sword for the dark arts. But it's much easier for an entity to give up something they never had in the first place than to quit it entirely after years of practice."

"He was so quick to stop using it too!"

"Yes, yes."

"So is the feared Yiling Patriarch actually Wei Wuxian or an evil entity?"

Chapter End Notes

[1] A stick of incense time is generally about five to sixty minutes. In this case, Jin Ling is referring to ten minutes.

Next Chapter: Library Pavilion o(≥▽≤)o

Cloud Recess III - The Past

Chapter Summary

The Library Pavilion!

Chapter Notes

Revised 05/11/23

So sorry this chapter isn't the best quality! I started writing chapter 31 (I think that's the one I'm on?) but wanted to finish and post this before I completed that. I'll try to work something out between rewriting old chapters and posting new ones. Thank you for reading!

Woah, I posted this 5th July 2021.. It's been over 2 years, that's crazy

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The screen faded into a new scene, where Wei Wuxian was sitting by a riverside, his face resting on a palm. He absentmindedly poked a large branch into the water and made sharp swirling motions that attracted a pair of koi fish.

"Wei-Xiong!" A call from Nie Huaisang broke him out of his daze. The two koi fish that had appeared were no longer there, and they had already swam into the depths of the water, having been startled by the loud voice. Wei Wuxian turned his head around and sent a small smile to the pair approaching him.

"We already know who it is before we even see them."

"This boy really admires Wei Wuxian, doesn't he?"

Unexpectedly, the scene switched to show Lan Wangji, who was standing a distance away from the trio, and he appeared to be quietly observing them.

"What's this?" said Lan Xichen, making a sound of interest. "Wangji, you...?"

Lan Qiren loudly cleared his throat, his eyes flitting to and fro between Lan Wangji and the screen. He looked thankful, in a way, when Wei Wuxian smiled at his nephew, who returned

the expression almost immediately. As Wangji's Uncle, it eased something in his heart to see his nephew find happiness—

"I can smell the vinegar from here!"

"Look, Hanguang-Jun is kissing the Yiling Patriarch! He's totally jealous *now* as well!"

—but when they acted so shameless like that, it made his carefully cultivated facade of calmness melt like ice.

"*Wangji!*"

Upon catching a glimpse of white robes, Wei Wuxian's lips instantly spread into a broad grin. "Wangji-Xiong!" he called, waving the branch in the air.

"I'll never get used to hearing Wei Wuxian being so informal to Lan Wangji," said Jiang Wanyin, shaking his head in astonishment.

"Right?" agreed Lan Jingyi, wildly nodding his head in agreement. The girls (and when had Jingyi started including Wen Ruohan with the group?) murmured amongst themselves, and if the crowd didn't know what they were like, they would have assumed they were conspiring.

Lan Wangji didn't acknowledge Wei Wuxian, however, and he simply turned and walked away.

"Oh. Is that it? No blushing of the ears? No angry gaze?"

"Maybe he's shy?"

"That makes sense."

"Or maybe he just hates Wei Wuxian," suggested Jiang Cheng, always the positive one.

In response to his words, Wen Ruohan simply laughed, as though his statement deeply amused him. Aiya, youngsters these days. They're all too scared to talk to one another — come now, Xian-er, I'm sure Lan Wangji won't bite. Back in my day, I was quite a handsome lad; everyone flocked to me, girl or boy, like rats to a block of cheese."

"Lovely," said Lan Xichen politely.

"...Rats?" murmured a few of the younger disciples sadly.

"Is that how Hua-Jie really thinks of me?"

"Maybe I should have listened to my Mum when she said I stood no chance."

"What kind of mother says that to their child? She sounds horrible."

Wei Wuxian turned to face Jiang Cheng and Nie Huaisang, and he laughed. "He ignored me, bleh."

"Why does he sound happy about that?"

"I got it! It's a challenge! Wei Wuxian wants to become Lan Wangji's lover so he's happy that there's been some progress!"

"Friend," Jiang Cheng corrected automatically, but a frown soon followed. "Wait... friend? Could it be that Wei Wuxian— to Lan Wangji—?!"

Upon seeing his Uncle's face turn from pale, to green, and to the colour of his robes, Jin Ling felt a bit of sympathy — and perhaps a small amount of understanding.

Jiang Wanyin rolled his eyes. "What did you expect? Remember what you said in class last time? You're impossible!" He turned around to face the direction in which Lan Wangji had just left. "He's probably just like Lan Qiren, who thinks you're evil and bad to the guts."

"Thinks?" Lan Qiren scoffed. He looked quite disturbed by the events on the screen, but his face soon morphed into something akin to regret. "Well... maybe a bit of a troublemaker... but not evil."

"I knew you'd get there in the end, Uncle," said Lan Xichen, who seemed to be radiating happiness. "I'm sure Wangji would be very pleased to hear that. And Wuxian, for that matter."

On the other hand, Lan Wangji had lowered his head in shame, no longer able to be coddled by Wei Wuxian, who kept insisting everything was all right.

"I have no excuse," said Lan Wangji miserably.

"Sure you do," Wei Wuxian coddled. "Lan Zhan~ Husband, look at me! Look at you, so handsome! Actually, it makes me a bit happy to know I was able to marry you, when we used to be pretty much enemies. It makes for a cute love story, right?"

"Right... Very cute..." said a girl amongst the group sitting nearby Wen Ruohan, her hand scribbling as though the rate she was taking notes surpassed that of how quickly she could think.

Nie Huaisang stepped forwards, smiling behind his fan. "Yeah, Lan Wangji usually—" he began, before suddenly stopping, as though remembering something. ".No, he has

never been that rude."

"Come to think of it, Hanguang-Jun gives you the impression he is really unapproachable and mean," said Ouyang Zizhen. "But he is really very polite. If he just smiled, then we'd pretty much have another Clan Leader Lan!"

Nie Huaisang quickly turned around to face Wei Wuxian with a wide smile. "But to be honest, I think what Wei-Xiong said makes sense! I don't know how many years it will take people like me to cultivate step by step as they instruct us to. The wrath and resentment of vengeful ghosts can be readily used! That sounds exciting, doesn't it?!"

Nie Mingjue sighed, patting his leg as though habitually wishing to grasp the hilt of his blade Baxia. "Huaisang... I understand how you feel about your talent for cultivation but please don't think of messing with resentful energy ever again. It is not right. And you know full well how things ended for Wei Wuxian."

"Da-Ge, I really am ashamed, I promise!" Nie Huaisang exclaimed, his face stark red in embarrassment. "I only said that then as a joke! I never even considered doing it myself, I swear, Da-Ge!"

Upon seeing his brother looking so dejected and piteous, Nie Mingjue raised his hand and gently patted Nie Huaisang on the head. "Da-Ge knows, so don't pull that face."

"You reverse the natural order, ignore ethics and morality!" exclaimed an aged, dry voice as though they hadn't the strength to shout.

"Huh? I feel like I've heard that somewhere before."

"You're right, it sounds so familiar."

"Wait, isn't that what Lan Qiren said to Wei Wuxian after he brought up the idea of messing with resentful energy?"

"You're right!"

"Lan Qiren, where's the originality?!"

"Yeah! Saying the same line twice is a bit lame!"

Wei Wuxian laid down on a log, and once again poked the long stick into the water. "That's exactly what I meant. If we can make use of them, then many places that gather resentment won't be forbidden places anymore," he turned onto his back with a sigh, "Even the Burial Mounds in Yiling will become a treasure trove."

At the mention of the corpse mountain, the already dark room turned blacker, and the frigid temperature appeared to drop by tens of degrees.

"He's thinking of controlling resentful energy and inhabiting the Burial mounds already, even at such a young age... So he planned this for a few years, I see."

"Obviously! How could one get all of that power in a matter of *three months*? It's simply ludicrous, I tell you!"

Wei Wuxian's nose wrinkled when he looked at the group of gossiping old men huddled in a corner of the cave. "My word, what is it with you old men? I'm surprised you don't have grey hairs from being too strict like Lan Qiren yet."

Lan Wangji, who was also offended on Wei Wuxian's behalf, made a firm sound of agreement, "Mn."

Snickering could be heard from a group of rebellious gossiping Lan disciples, all of whom were surrounding Lan Jingyi.

"Hey! Did you hear? Second Young Master Lan said Lan Qiren is old!"

"Yeah! I never thought I'd hear him say that!"

"Aiyo, you youngsters don't hear *half* of it," said Lan Jingyi, flicking his nose with a confident smirk. "Hanguang-Jun says *all sorts* in the inner part of the sect. Aiyo, it's such a shame no one but I and Sizhui ever hear it."

"What the hell?" said Jiang Cheng, looking at Lan Xichen and making a motion that was certainly him trying to convey the concept of 'punishment'. "Wei Wuxian was clearly the one who said that. Zewu-Jun, why are you the only *sane* person in your sect? I feel like it's just you and I who haven't been brainwashed by our brothers."

Lan Xichen's smile was dark, and he looked amused as though Jiang Wanyin didn't understand an inside joke. "Mhm... Certainly, Clan Leader Jiang."

"Enough," Jiang Cheng scolded firmly. "This is getting ridiculous. You can say whatever, but you can't go down that path.

"A-Cheng, don't take that too seriously," said Wei Wuxian, laughing as though just the thought was ridiculous. "I'm not stupid enough to do that. I'll follow the right path like the others do."

A loud dry cough erupted from a single person — but in a matter of seconds, it seemed like the majority of the population of *cultivators* had all caught a cold, as everyone began to cough in unison.

"Definitely, Yiling Patriarch, Grandmaster of Demonic Cultivation, Lone survivor of the Burial Mounds."

"A promise is a promise, after all! Wei Wuxian is a man who honours his promises!"

Wei Ying's lips thinned into a line. "You don't need to rub salt on my wounds."

"I admire his resolve, though it may seem a bit far-fetched," The boy coughed. "Grandmaster – Demonic Cultivation – Evil guy I grew up thinking he was under my bed."

"*You've* been told that story *too?*" gasped another.

"Yes, many times," the boy sighed. "My Mum used to say that if I stayed up when it was dark, he would curse me to be unlucky for the rest of my life."

"My Mum said that too!" The other person yelped. "Oh my— do you think we have the same Mum?"

"If it were that easy, someone would have tried already," said Wei Wuxian, concluding the conversation. He jerked up from where he sat and swiftly snaked an arm around Jiang Cheng's shoulders. "It's still early. Let's go hunt some pheasants!"

Jiang Cheng shook him off, and stepped away from him for good measure. "Forget about the pheasants! Lan Qiren ordered you to copy *The Book Of Discipline* three times, and reflect on your wrongdoings."

Wei Wuxian dramatically held out a hand, gasping. "Three times?! I'd rather kill myself! No way!"

Lan Wangji looked momentarily struck by the words, and he unconsciously tightened his grip on Wei Wuxian's hand. Upon seeing his husband so disturbed, Wei Wuxian guiltily squeezed his back.

"I'm sorry, Lan Zhan, that was really stupid for me to say," he said apologetically.

"Now isn't that sweet?" said Wen Ruohan happily.

"Overprotective husband is always a bonus!"

"This is what my parents should be like. Instead, there's one screaming and another chasing them with a fan."

Nie Huaisang tapped Wei Wuxian on the shoulder and smiled widely. "I'll do it for you! I'll do it!"

Wei Wuxian paused thoughtfully. "Hm? But you won't do it for free, will you? Say it. What do you want?"

Nie Huaisang nervously chuckled, and he squeezed his closed fan more tightly. "Here's the thing, Wei-Xiong," he said, timidly scratching his cheek. "Lan Qiren has a bad

habit. He likes to quiz us unexpectedly-"

"Hold on!" Wei Wuxian interjected, holding out a hand to stop his rambling. "You want me to take the exam for you?!"

"Huaisang?!" thundered Nie Mingjue, immediately looking down at his trembling brother, who was hiding his face with his hands.

Nie Huaisang tutted as he grabbed Wei Wuxian's hand and passed him a scroll. "No, telling me the answers is enough! I've got everything prepared."

"HUAISANG!!"

Nie Huaisang ran away.

Wei Wuxian opened the small scroll and observed the contents with a frown, "Lan Qiren already hates me. If he finds out.."

"Please, Wei-Xiong!" Nie Huaisang pleaded. "It's okay, nothing will go wrong."

"I never thought there'd be a day where Wei Wuxian was afraid of getting in trouble," said Lan Xichen fondly.

"Well, his punishment was already bad enough, I'm sure he knew that acting up again would just result in even more," said Jiang Wanyin.

The screen suddenly switched to Nie Huaisang, who was hanging his head as he trailed behind Wei Wuxian and Jiang Wanyin.

"Well... Sorry, Wei-Xiong," he said dejectedly.

Lan Xichen's kindling admiration crumbled as soon as it sprouted, "...Nevermind."

"Did they really think Lan Qiren wouldn't find out?" Jiang Wanyin huffed. "Such idiots."

"Didn't you say it'd be okay?!" exclaimed Wei Wuxian.

Nie Huaisang looked up at him, and he looked genuinely bewildered. "I didn't expect Lan Zhan to suddenly appear..."

"Anyways, you're on your own," said Jiang Wanyin, motioning to the building they had arrived at. "There, the library is right ahead."

"It's only copying a book," said Wei Wuxian happily, skipping across the bridge.
"Huaisang~"

"Lan Qiren said no one is allowed to help you," Nie Huaisang reminded him.

"How would he know that?" said Wei Wuxian, quickly opening the door. "Unless... Does he have someone watching me?"

"Exactly," said Jiang Wanyin.

"Seriously?!" Wei Wuxian exclaimed as he looked inside the room, where Lan Wangji was already seated, copying down various scriptures. As though acknowledging Wei Wuxian's presence, Lan Wangji slowly looked up at him.

"Yes! Lan Qiren said he's to copy *The Book Of Discipline* three times! They'll have plenty of time to bond!"

"Lan Qiren, you genius!"

"You're so amazing! I respect you so much!"

Lan Qiren, while he had always wanted respect from the younger generation, felt as though he had only gained more grey hairs in those few seconds.

Wei Wuxian stared in astonishment, "Lan Zhan..."

After seeing Lan Wangji, Nie Huaisang and Jiang Cheng once again smoothly slipped away, not wanting to get themselves in any sort of trouble.

"These two never fail to make me laugh. Who knew Sect Leader Jiang used to be so fun?"

Jiang Cheng cleared his throat loudly. "Used to be?"

"Yeah that's right!"

"He's so scary now!"

Jiang Cheng began to mutter curses under his breath, such as: 'These idiots' and 'They don't know how to appreciate humour.'

Wei Wuxian turned around, only to see that they had both slipped away when he wasn't looking. "Hey! You little-" he suddenly remembered who was behind him, and he let out a heavy sigh, "This guy is dead boring. And I'll have to sit with him for an entire month? This is torture."

"There is no way he didn't say that loudly on purpose," said Jin Zixuan. He looked at Wei Wuxian, who was quietly giggling into a hand, to his husband's exasperation.

"Wei Wuxian, be sure to thank Lan Qiren next time."

"An entire month with him means an entire month of improving your relationship—"

"Lan Wangji still hates him, remember. Perhaps they use it to flirt? Is this the 'Love Arc' where they grow strong feelings for one another, but unfortunately have to hide it from the world?"

"Flirting? I don't think so, considering how Lan Wangji is now. Maybe they just bond, who knows?"

"That's more likely! Besides, I do like my bromance — you know, platonic love between brothers?"

"No, no, no! They're *lovers*, not brothers! Say that one more time and I'll break your legs!"

The crowd's eyes immediately whipped to Jiang Wanyin, before they all double-took when they realised it was a woman who had spoken.

'So a woman like Sect Leader Jiang really exists?'

The Library Pavilion, a place accustomed to silence and peace, was now filled with Wei Wuxian's cheerful laughter, dramatic sobs, and intrigued questions. "Wangji-Xiong, a question for you. Do you really hate me?"

"No," came an immediate reply from Lan Wangji.

"You're still ignoring me," Wei Wuxian whined, and Lan Wangji simply continued to remain silent.

"Well done, Wangji," said Lan Qiren, nodding in approval.

"..."

"..."

"At first, it looked like he was just annoying Lan Wangji, but I'm beginning to think he's one of those little boys who tease the girl they like."

Jiang Cheng looked as though people were only just coming to their senses after a long dream, "It was exactly like that. Lan Wangji this, Lan Wangji that. Wei Wuxian didn't shut up for even a second!"

Wei Wuxian chuckled and used two fingers to tap on the table, and they slowly crept closer and closer to Lan Wangji with every word he spoke. "Hey, hey. What should I call you to get a response?"

"Honestly, who pesters someone this much?!"

"How did it take *thirteen* years for them to get together? It looks like they were both interested at the start."

"Really? Because Lan Wangji looks *so* in love," said Jiang Wanyin sarcastically.

Wei Wuxian tried leaping into his personal space when he least expected it, but Lan Wangji didn't get shocked or speak a single word to him. "Wangji?"

After receiving no reply, he continued, "Lan Wangji?"

"So this is when Wei Wuxian began to call him so intimately," commented a middle-aged woman. "I remember those days like they were yesterday — no one dared to even call him Lan Wangji in his presence."

"No wonder... he looks like the type to bite your head off if you get too close. Too scary!"

Wei Wuxian slumped onto the table, ready to give up, when he looked as though he was struck by a brilliant idea. "Lan Zhan!"

Lan Wangji didn't look up at him, for he was busy trying to tug his sleeve away from where Wei Wuxian was sitting on it.

Jin Ling rolled his eyes, but he immediately closed them after realising his mistake, "Uncle, who knew you were even more annoying when you were younger? Poor Hanguang-Jun for putting up with it!"

"A-Ling, manners," said Jiang Yanli sternly. Jin Ling looked at her, nodded, and was silent for a long while after.

Lan Jingyi rubbed his eyes in confusion, and then he tapped his ear as though he couldn't believe what was happening right before him. "What? Jin Ling actually shut up when he was told to, for once? Madam Jiang is so amazing!"

Ouyang Zizhen was just as astonished. "He's an arrogant peacock with the temper of a young mistress! I never knew someone would be capable of shutting him up!"

Jiang Yanli softly smiled at them. "Call me auntie, you two. You're A-Xian's beloved juniors, after all."

Meanwhile, many of the Jin disciples began to whisper among themselves, some with surprise, and others with admiration.

"Madam Jiang is a good mother to her son."

"I wish my mum was like that. All she ever does is scold me."

"I'm so envious."

"I'm so glad we have someone like her teaching our Sect Leader. The previous Madam Jin was a right nutjob!"

Jin Zixuan's neck stretched and his head was so high that he started to look like a peacock.
'That's right! Praise my wife! She's amazing!'

Wei Wuxian continued to murmur nicknames to himself before he jerked up, as though struck by an epiphany. "Oh, I got it! Second brother Lan!"

His rambling came to a halt when both of his lips were shut together, silencing him.

"The Lan Clan's silencing spell," concluded many at once, who had all witnessed it in person many times already.

"The number of times Lan Wangji uses that spell never fails to amaze me," said Nie Huaisang quietly. "You'd think it was an abuse of power..."

Wei Wuxian's face turned red and he began to frantically claw at his throat. He hurriedly sat down, grabbed a piece of paper and an inked brush, and began to speedily write.

Lan Wangji watched with a neutral expression, even as the paper was shoved in his face. "..."

It read: Sorry, please remove the spell.

"Of course *now* he's sorry," sneered Madam Yu. "Only punishments work on that boy."

Lan Wangji lifted his book to cover half of his face, and indifferently watched as Wei Wuxian slumped over in defeat.

"...Is he laughing?"

"He's actually laughing at Wei Wuxian! What other reason would he cover half of his face?!"

"That's right! I see his shoulders shaking!"

Wei Wuxian glanced at his husband with a wronged expression, "Lan Zhan, were you really —?!"

Both Lan Wangji's refusal to meet his eyes and his odd silence was answer enough.

"Wait, so it's true?!" Wei Wuxian cried. "You actually were laughing at me?!"

Despite Wei Wuxian's many attempts at garnering Lan Wangji's attention, nothing could break his cold, frigid exterior. After laying down for a while, pondering over what to do, Wei Wuxian conjured yet another drawing and presented it to Lan Wangji: A fox and a chicken facing one another.

Lan Wangji took the sheet of paper, ignoring the hopeful glance in Wei Wuxian's eyes, and neatly folded it into a square before chucking it into a box adjacent to the desk.

"Boring," Lan Wangji murmured. He appeared indifferent, yet there was a hint of fondness in his eyes and he released the spell.

"Fondness... FONDness... FONDNESS!!" A girl squealed, excitedly clapping hands with Wen Ruohan, who was just as energetic. It took a moment for her to realise what she had done, and she quietly retreated into the crowd, her face red and ashamed.

When the spell was finally lifted, Wei Wuxian exhaled deeply. "Oh god, I thought I was gonna die!" When he finally caught his breath, he turned to face Lan Wangji. "Hey! Lan Zhan, I wanted to apologise to you! How could you treat me like that?!"

"Apologise?"

"Someone please explain to me how that held some semblance of an apology."

Lan Wangji didn't spare him a glance, and he continued looking at his book. "One more word, it will be four times."

At a complete loss, Wei Wuxian eventually gave up and left Lan Wangji to his devices.

Diligence, Morality, Harmony, Perseverance

"What's this?"

"It's a select few of the 4000 GusuLan rules," explained one of the Lan disciples.

"Wasn't it 3000?"

"Oh, that sounds boring. Why are we seeing this? Someone skip to the cute parts."

"...We can't skip it, and how is it unimportant? Don't attack the entire Lan Clan like that, Shidi."

The screen switched to Wei Wuxian's exhausted face, lying on the floor after having completed a long day of writing lines. Lan Wangji was sitting at the very same desk, and he was turning the pages of a thin book.

Faith, Respect, Modesty, Loyalty

The drawings eventually piled up until the box was full with the small folded papers.

"Did you notice how Lan Wangji hasn't thrown them out?" said Wen Ruohan, grinning widely. "I'm sure it would have been easy for him to burn them, even — but he's kept every one."

Be honest and sincere, Trust is the coin of the realm

One Month later.

"The month is over? That quick?"

"I wanted to see more sweet moments, such as Wei Wuxian teasing Lan Wangji. It's just too funny!"

The screen switched to Wei Wuxian diligently writing, his brows furrowed and eyes concentrated as though he was very determined. Lan Wangji was busy reading another book when Wei Wuxian appeared in front of him. He looked up, not at all amused, like he half-expected Wei Wuxian to prank him again.

"Young Master Lan, it's been a month. I won't come in tomorrow," said Wei Wuxian, whipping out a large sheet of paper and thrusting it in Lan Wangji's face. "Here's a parting gift for you. You can have it."

The image was a very detailed drawing of Lan Wangji elegantly sitting at his desk, turning the page of a book. Lan Wangji's eyes widened, and he looked up at Wei Wuxian like he was seeing him for the first time.

"Wei-Xiong, I forgot you were good at drawing," said Nie Huaisang thoughtfully. "I should get you to help me paint my fans — we would totally be such good fan friends!"

"Hold on a minute," said Lan Sizhui slowly, tilting his head in confusion. "Isn't that... Isn't that the picture A-Die has framed in the Jingshi?"

Wen Ruohan's ear twitched. "What? Framed?"

"So Hanguang-Jun really kept it?!" Even Lan Jingyi looked surprised. "I never would have guessed..."

Lan Wangji sighed, as though acquiescing, and he placed down his book for the first time, taking the sheet of paper from Wei Wuxian's hand.

"He's not folding it," squealed a girl excitedly. "Oh my days, HE'S NOT FOLDING IT! AHH! NIE HUAISANG LOOK AT THIS!" she said, grabbing the Sect Leader by the arm and shaking him wildly.

Nie Huaisang, who was being shaken like a ragdoll, groaned, "I can see it! I can see it! Can you let go, please?!"

But as soon as Lan Wangji saw the entire whole picture, his face contorted in anger instantaneously.

"What? Why is he angry?"

Standing out in the drawing was a large flower atop his head that he hadn't noticed before — most likely because Wei Wuxian's hand had been covering it purposely.

"Oh."

"Oh."

"Oh."

"Well that's certainly one way to get him to notice you."

Wei Wuxian burst into explosive laughter and he was so hysterical he started to slap his side with a hand. "How do you like the gift, Young Master Lan?! Ahaha!"

"Bo-"

Before Lan Wangji could continue, Wei Wuxian interjected, "It's 'boring' again, isn't it? Can't you say anything new?!"

He cast a short and brief glance at the book Lan Wangji had been reading, and a small mischievous smile crept up his face.

"Wei-Xiong, don't tell me this is—" gasped Nie Huaisang.

Wei Wuxian grinned. "That's right!"

"Extremely boring."

"Congratulations! Congratulations! Congratulations! Great things must be said thrice! Lan Wangji has broadened his vocabulary!"

"Wei Wuxian, you're amazing!"

Lan Wangji placed down the drawing and grabbed the book he was just reading. When he opened it, his eyes widened in shock and terror. Mostly terror, though.

Lan Wangji silently placed down the drawing and picked up the book he had just been reading. When he opened it, however, his eyes widened in indisputable shock. He immediately threw the book to the floor, which fluttered open and revealed many inappropriate drawings.

"Shame...less..." Lan Qiren choked out before he once again spat out an alarming amount of blood. Lan Xichen was fortunate enough to catch him in time before he slumped to the hard floor upon having fallen unconscious.

The Lan disciples who witnessed it happen jerked up at once and broke into a panic.

"Grandmaster Lan! Don't die!"

"Ahh! He's dead! What do we do?!"

"Uncle! Stay with me!"

"He's lost too much blood! He's dying!!!"

"Hey, everyone move out of the way!" said Wen Qing, gently pushing the crowd of Lans to the side. "I'm a Doctor, let me through. This is happening way too much for it to be safe on his body."

Wei Wuxian had already anticipated Lan Wangji's rage and he had hid himself discreetly behind a bookshelf. When Lan Wangji looked at him furiously, he once again burst into a fit of laughter.

Lan Wangji was so furious that he was trembling. “Wei Ying!”

“Ah, Lan Wangji finally said his name,” said Wen Ruohan joyfully. The crowd could just imagine him sitting back with a cup of tea as he leisurely watched a fierce battle take place. “He skipped from the Gongzi straight to birth name... I can’t say I’m complaining, though.”

Wei Wuxian let himself flop onto the floor, still chuckling. It seemed like he hadn’t had this much amusement for days. "I'm here! I'm here!"

"You—" Lan Wangji subtly glanced to Bichen that was stationed on the wall behind him. Upon seeing this, Wei Wuxian instantaneously grabbed the book and rushed for the exit to the Library Pavilion.

“Smart decision.”

“I’ll light some incense for you, Wei Wuxian, because I don’t see you coming out of this alive.”

‘*Do not fight privately,*’ Lan Xichen thought of a rule Lan Wangji himself had punished disciples for breaking, and he laughed. ‘*It looks like Wuxian has already affected him this much. Though I must say, I never did know the extent of Wei Wuxian’s trouble-making.*’

He was just glad his Uncle was in the care of a renowned doctor. If he had been awake, he would already be in a pool of blood.

“Ai- Don’t fight!” called out the bold maiden who had previously been manhandling Nie Huaisang. “Why does it always end with you two fighting? — Aiyo, I’m so angry — Lan Wangji, don’t injure Wei Wuxian, you’ll regret it — I could die because of these two idiots — They’re just so frustrating!” When she finished, she was breathing so heavily that a few had grown concerned.

Nie Huaisang silently stepped away, afraid of her latching onto his arm once more.

Lan Wangji had unsheathed Bichen and he was chasing Wei Wuxian around the library, murderous intent extremely vivid in his eyes. Wei Wuxian grabbed Suibian from where he had placed it on the table, and he held it up to Lan Wangji. "Manners! Second Young Master Lan, mind your manners! If you fight me, your library will be destroyed!"

Lan Wangji was still trembling in fury. "You.. What on earth are you?!"

Wei Wuxian seemed to think about a response before he simply laughed. "I'm a man."

“If I had said that, it would have been straight to the streets with me, I can assure you.”

"Have you no shame?!" exclaimed Lan Wangji.

Wei Wuxian raised an eyebrow. "So this is something I should be ashamed of? It's just erotic art. Every man has seen something like that. Don't tell me you've never seen it."

"Of course he hasn't! Did you forget he was raised in the GusuLan Sect?!"

"Yeah, but—" a young disciple began.

"Let me repeat myself," The Lan repeated firmly. "He was raised in the GusuLan Sect."

"...Okay."

After a few moments of not receiving any response, Wei Wuxian glanced at Lan Wangji and he gasped. "Have you actually never-"

"Get out. We will fight," said Lan Wangji coldly.

"Fight?! Fighting without permission is forbidden!" spluttered Lan Jingyi, who had never seen Hanguang-Jun himself break the rules so effortlessly.

Wei Wuxian looked at him and tutted. "No, no, didn't you know, Second Young Master Lan, fighting without permission is forbidden in Cloud Recess."

"Now he decides to follow the rules?"

"He's even scolding Second Young Master Lan!"

"What a bold young man!"

Lan Wangji paused for a few seconds before swiftly grabbing the book from Wei Wuxian's hands. Wei Wuxian chuckled, "Why are you fighting for it? You don't need to fight for it even if you want to read it. I borrowed it only for you, anyway." He quickly added with a smirk, "Now that you've seen *my kind of fiction*, you're my friend!"

Lan Wangji clenched the rolled-up book in his fist, gradually infusing more and more spiritual energy into his palm. "I. Will not. Read it."

Wei Wuxian sighed as he watched the remains of the book fall to the floor. "Tsk, what a waste."

"A waste indeed," said Nie Huaisang solemnly.

Lan Wangji sent him a warning glare. "Get lost."

The Lans broke into scandalised gasps.

"Second Young Master Lan, language!"

"How could you say that to your Zhiji- I mean Young Master Wei?!"

The slip-up didn't go unnoticed to Wen Ruohan, who sent the group of Lans a smirk. His expression looked as though he was plotting or conspiring something very intensely.

**Wei Wuxian leapt to his feet and looked at Lan Wangji with a wronged expression.
"Look at you, Lan Zhan. Everyone says that you're a gentleman of excellence, the pearl
of the world, carrying yourself with unparalleled courtesy--So it turns out this is it."**

"I'm pretty sure that *you're* the only one who thinks he's '*the pearl of the world*' . How oblivious can you get?"

**"Didn't you know that noise is forbidden in Cloud Recess?" Wei Wuxian continued,
"And you even told me to 'get lost'. Was it the first time you said such a thing to
someone?"**

He was interrupted when Lan Wangji thrust Bichen just centimetres away from his throat. Wei Wuxian swiftly dodged it, and they continued the fight on equal footing.

"They fight so much! Do you think this is just their way of communicating?"

**Wei Wuxian began to climb out of the window, one leg hanging inside, one leg outside.
He held two fingers together and saluted to Lan Wangji, who glared back at him. "Then
get lost it is! I'm the best at getting lost. No need to see me off!"**

He leaped out, landed firmly on the ground, and was greeted by a group of disciples, as well as Jiang Cheng and Nie Huaisang.

"He's here, he's here!" they said at once, quickly shuffling forward to talk to him.

Lan Wangji paused. *'They were waiting outside?'*

Wei Wuxian seemingly caught on to his confusion and smiled, "Lan-er-gege, I'm really sneaky aren't I? There's loads of rules I've broken that you never caught on to."

Lan Wangji didn't look at all bothered. "Mn."

Nie Huaisang's eyes sparkled in admiration and reverence. "Wei-Xiong, this is the first time I've heard Lan Wangji tell someone to 'get lost'! How did you do it?!"

Wei Wuxian shrugged, and he didn't look at all put-off by the attention. "What an occasion today that I helped him receive his first. Nie-Xiong, what happened to your yellow-book was truly a pity. I haven't finished reading it yet. It was incredible!"

Nie Mingjue's lips twitched, "What?"

Nie Huaisang shook his head enthusiastically. "Not a pity at all! I have as many as you need!"

Nie Mingjue thundered, "HUAISANG! GET HERE RIGHT NOW!!"

But Nie Huaisang was nowhere to be seen, for he had seen this coming and had already run away before his Da-Ge could catch up.

Wei Wuxian snaked an arm over Jiang Cheng's shoulders, who didn't make any move to shake it off, and instead focused on scolding him. "What are you gloating over?! You've seriously offended Lan Wangji and Lan Qiren. Just wait for your death tomorrow! Nobody's gonna bury your corpse for you."

Wei Wuxian grinned, "Who cares as long as I've teased him? You've already buried my corpse so many times. There's nothing wrong with once more."

"Shoo, shoo! Don't let me know next time when you're doing such a thing! Don't ask me to watch, either!"

In moments, the screen gradually transitioned into darkness.

"*Jian* is so cute!" exclaimed one of the girls.

"*Jian* ? What's that?" asked another.

"It's a ship name for Wei Wuxian and Lan Wangji! 'Ji' from 'Wangji' and 'An' from 'Wuxian'!"

"No offence, but that sounds really bad."

"What about Wuji?" suggested a third party. "The 'Wu' from 'Wuxian' and 'Ji' from 'Wangji'? Their ship name describes them, unrestrained! Their love is-"

"Stop. That's really cheesy."

"How about Xianyun?"

Wen Ruohan laughed very loudly, and gathered everyone's attention at once. "Girlies, Wuji and Xianyun are really nice ship names, but what about *Wangxian ? Forgetting Envies.* "

"Oh my word, Grandmaster— I mean— Wen Ruohan, you're a genius!"

"Wangxian it is!"

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all for your lovely comments, I enjoy reading them all! ↗(• ᐃ • ↘)

Next Chapter: Water Ghouls! (つ▀▀▀)つ

Biling Lake I - The Past

Chapter Summary

Water Ghouls

Chapter Notes

ok like grammarly is my new bestfriend now
one time I wrote "was was" and didn't even know
Nie Mingjue is pretty ooc ok I dont care so don't scream at me for it

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Wei Wuxian hummed, "That one felt quite short. Why did we need to see that anyway? Lan Zhan already knows how cheeky I am."

"Mn." Lan Wangji agreed. He paused for a moment before adding, "Sorry.." '*For what I did to you in the past*' was heard but not said.

Wei Wuxian beamed, "Lan-er-gege, it's fine. Anyways, aren't I really handsome?! I was so handsome back then, right? Right?!!"

"Mn."

Wei Wuxian gasped, "Lan Zhan, your ears are red! So do you prefer that body to the one I'm in now?!"

"Wei Ying is Wei Ying."

"Lan Zhan, you're so good~"

Meanwhile, Jiang Cheng choked on his saliva.

Still lying unconscious and in Wen Qing's care, Lan Qiren paled. (Seriously, was it a sixth sense?)

Wei Wuxian pried off his husband's arm from his waist (after much resistance) and walked to the platform, Jingyi trailing behind.

Wei Ying scrolled through the list of names, "Hmm. Resurrecting someone is a big deal, Jingyi, leave it to the adults."

Jin Ling snorted, "So Uncle is doing it too."

Lan Jingyi pouted, "B-But! A-Niang!"

Wei Wuxian began to turn around, "Ai! Don't disobey your parents. How disrespectful- AH!" he startled when an expressionless face appeared instead of the youth's. He clutched his chest, "Song Lan, don't scare me like that!"

Song Lan bowed, "My apologies, Young Master Wei. It's just.." He hesitated for a moment before continuing, "This can resurrect people, yes?.."

Wei Wuxian nodded.

"Then..." Song Lan Continued.

"It's possible." Wei Wuxian assured, knowing what the other wanted, "Xiao Xingchen might be one of the people from the same category you came from. There's only a few people who fit the 'Yi Quartet' section and what-not."

"En."

Wei Wuxian turned around, pressed the buttons like a pro, and the screen eventually showed the four character buttons. **[Character Two]** was no longer lit up like the rest.

He gestured to Song Lan to choose one, in which he pressed **[Character Three]**

A while light engulfed the room for a brief moment.

When the brightness finally lessened, a petite figure holding a bamboo walking stick timidly glanced around. As soon as they saw Song Lan, tears cascaded down their face like a broken stream and they ran up to him, itching to jump into his arms, "Daozhang! You're alive!"

Song Lan nodded, a hint of a smile in his eyes, "Miss, I'm glad you're alright."

A-Qing rubbed at her wet eyes, "I'm sorry.. I'm so sorry..."

After a moment, she paused, "..Wait. My voice?!" She glanced up, "My eyes?! ...Daozhang, I can see! I can speak!"

He let a small smile creep up his face, "En."

A-Qing glanced around for the familiar figure of Xiao Xingchen, "Does that mean..?"

Song Lan shook his head, much to her despair.

On the screen, large text appeared. [Episode Four (第四集)]

Wei Wuxian walked away with a smile, not before giving them both an assuring nod.

He once again seated himself, ready to watch.

The screen showed the following morning, where Nie Huaisang excitedly ran down the halls of Cloud Recess with a joyous smile. "Wei-Xiong! Wei-Xiong!"

As soon as he reached Wei Wuxian's room, he slammed the doors open, "Today really is your lucky day!"

Wei Wuxian sat up from his bed, "Really? What's up?"

"Last night the old man went to Qinghe to attend our sect's discussion conference! No school for the next few days!" Nie Huaisang merrily informed.

Wei Wuxian's eyes lit up, "Wow!"

"Wow!" The juniors repeated in unison.

He jumped off the bed and began to pull on his shoes, "This day really is my lucky day-- Even the heavens are helping me! Ahaha!"

Jiang Cheng was seated on his own bed, calmly polishing Sandu's blade, "When he comes back, you're still gonna get your punishment."

Wei Wuxian flashed him a bright smile and a thumbs up, "Why should the living care about their death? I'll keep up the *carpe diem* till then!"

Some of the younger disciples paused, as if actually considering his words.

Though, it didn't last for very long. They were soon sent warning glares.

He lightly kicked Jiang Cheng in the leg, "Come on! Let's go do some *carpe diem* !"

Yu Ziyuan huffed, "Always dragging A-Cheng into trouble. You're a disgrace to our sect!"

Nobody decided to mention how he defected long after her death. (It'd be amusing to watch her reaction when she finds out.)

When they finally left the room, the trio walked along the silent hallways, Wei Wuxian in the centre, "I refuse to believe that I can't even find a few little pheasants on this mountain of the Lan Sect's. Haha!"

"He's always thinking of ways to break the rules. Is there ever a time where he isn't, or at least isn't *thinking* of breaking a rule?"

"Tone it down a bit!" Jiang Cheng warned.

All three disciples paused when they found themselves standing in front of a pair of Lans: Lan Xichen and Lan Wangji.

Wei Wuxian blinked, "Huh? There are two.."

The crowd burst into a chorus of laughter.

"There are two Lan Wangjis?! That's clearly Lan Xichen!"

"This little idiot, oh my god!"

Wei Wuxian pouted, "It's not my fault they looked so similar.."

Lan Wangji couldn't stop the snicker that escaped his lips.

Wei Wuxian sent an accusing glare, "Lan Zhan, you're laughing too?! It wasn't my fault!"

"Mn.. Sorry *cough* Wei Ying."

"Hey! Was that another laugh?! Don't think I didn't hear that!"

His gaze locked upon the younger of the Twin Jades, "Lan Zhan!"

"At Least he knew which one of them was his husband." Wen Ruohan snickered.

Lan Xichen smiled, "You two are?"

Wei Wuxian and Jiang Cheng both saluted, "Wei Wuxian of YunmengJiang." "Jiang Wanyin of YunmengJiang."

"Brother Xichen.." Nie Huaisang timidly whispered from behind.

"When did he get there?!"

"If he didn't speak, I wouldn't have noticed him!"

"This act of his is quite amazing.."

The juniors paused.

"Wait- Act?!"

"Oh god, I forgot! This was just an act, wasn't it?!"

"He's too good! Too good!"

Nie Huaisang let a smile creep its way up his face, "I am quite amazing, right Da-Ge?"

Nie Mingjue nodded, "Quite."

As soon as the smile came, it faded, becoming a timid frown, "D-Da-ge.. Don't give me extra fencing lessons.. It's too exhausting.."

"He's too believable!" A Nie disciple commented.

"Sect Leader Nie, teach me how to do that! I can finally avoid the demon called my father-" Ouyang Zizhen was dutifully slapped on the back of his head.

Lan Xichen glanced to Nie Huaisang, "Huaisang, sometime ago, before I returned from Qinghe, your brother asked about your studies. How have you been? Will you be able to pass this year?"

"Probably.."

Since two years ago when he first came to study in Cloud Recess, Nie Huaisang's grades have never passed a 'B', thus his brother has always forced him to retake the course.

"I guess it doesn't work against Nie Mingjue."

"Sadly it doesn't.." Nie Huaisang whined.

"You've got it rough," Lan Jingyi patted him on the back, "Fighting!"

"Zewu-Jun, what are you two planning on doing?" Wei Wuxian smoothly changed the subject upon noticing Nie Huaisang's discomfort.

Nie Huaisang gaped, "Wei-Xiong?! You're so considerate! I wasn't facing you so I wouldn't have known!"

Wei Wuxian beamed, "I'm so considerate, right? Lan Zhan, Lan Zhan, tell me I'm considerate!"

Lan Wangji nodded, "Mn. Wei Ying is considerate."

Wei Wuxian practically glowed in happiness at the response.

Jiang Cheng shook his head, "He's becoming more and more childish. Seriously, how does Lan Wangji live with that?"

"To exterminate a few water ghouls. We are short of hands, so I returned to fetch Wangji." Lan Xichen informed.

Lan Wangji grabbed Lan Xichen's hand and tried to pull him away, "Brother, there is no need for small talk. The matter permits no delay. Let us depart immediately."

"He's just shy~" The girls teased, "Don't be shy, court Wei Wuxian and tell the world how he's yours!"

"Yes!"

"Have some passion, Lan Wangji!"

"You need to *feel* the passion!"

"Wait, wait! I know how to catch Water Ghouls!" Wei Wuxian interjected.

"Well done, Wuxian! Two points for you!" A girl squealed.

"Change that to three! He's setting himself up!"

Lan Wangji clenched his fists at his sides, "That is not necessary. The GusuLan Sect is also-"

"In Yunmeng, we catch Water Ghouls all the time." Wei Wuxian smoothly cut him off, "And we have no lessons for the next few days anyways. Zewu-Jun, could you take us along?"

Lan Xichen smiled, "Sure, then, many thanks for the help. You can go prepare. We will depart together. Would Huaisang like to come as well?"

Nie Huaisang was jolted out of his daze, "I'll pass. I need to review for my lessons.."

Nie Mingjue exhaled a fond sigh, "Huaisang.. So you can actually revise for your lessons? I'm proud of you."

Nie Huaisang felt a wave of delight and warmth wash over him, "Da-Ge.."

"Let's go!" Wei Wuxian beamed as he snaked an arm around Jiang Cheng's shoulders, "Time to get ready for catching Water Ghouls!"

"Good going, my son!" Wen Ruohan decided to ignore the glares he was sent, "We just need them to be left alone and get lost in the middle of a forest! Then they fall in a river! Soon after, they will take off their shirts to let them dry in a fire. Secretly, they'd both take peeks at one another when suddenly, they notice that the other was staring too! Both of them will turn bright red and hastily look away!"

Jiang Cheng raised an eyebrow, "That's quite the story.. Where'd you hear that? Kind of lame."

Wen Ruohan laughed, "It's a cliche scene in the romance novels I read! My personal favourite is *Love is Magic* ! It was written a couple years before the war."

Lan Xichen gasped, "You have that book too?!"

Nie Huaisang jumped between them, "I have it too!"

"Haha! That's good!" Wen Ruohan chuckled, "We're like little girlies who discuss their favourite things with each other!"

"That's right! That's right!"

As he watched them leave, Lan Wangji sent Lan Xichen a betrayed look, "Brother, why did you bring them? Exorcism is no laughing matter!"

"Haha! He really *was* betrayed! Sect Leader Lan, you little schemer!"

Lan Xichen grinned with pride, "I was just doing my job."

Lan Xichen's expression never faltered for even a second, "The head disciple and son of Sect Leader Jiang are quite well-known in Yunmeng. They should know more than laughing."

"Xichen-gel! You understand us so well!" Wei Wuxian beamed.

Lan Xichen grinned knowingly at Lan Wangji, "And, you wish for him to go as well, do you not?"

"What?"

"He does?!"

"How can Sect Leader Lan tell?!"

The girls rolled their eyes, "Seriously? You can't tell? What are your eyes even for?"

After receiving no response, he elaborated, "I only agreed because you looked as though you wanted the Head Disciple of the Jiang Sect to come along."

Wen Ruohan lightly shook his head with a wide grin, "Sect Leader Lan, you sure do know your stuff! Setting them up like this, you have earnt my respect!"

Lan Xichen smiled, "It was my pleasure. You also have a good eye, as well."

Wen Ruohan held out a hand, in which Lan Xichen shook gratefully. The former sighed, "We would be great sworn brothers, wouldn't we? Your little brother and my son—" A glare from Jiang Fengmian. "-I mean Wei Wuxian. Although they are married, there's still plenty of ways we can set them up aha!" *He's actually my soon to be son'* went unsaid wasn't unheard.

Nie Mingjue stood up, "Xichen! Why are you making friends with that degenerate?!"

Jin Guangyao had the urge to step in as well but paused when he realized that he was still in hiding.

Lan Xichen beckoned a snarling Nie Mingjue over with a hand and leaned over to whisper in his ear.

Not even a moment later, Nie Mingjue and Wen Ruohan shook hands, while the former sent small glances to Wei Wuxian and Lan Wangji. (The girls suspected Lan Xichen coaxed Nie Mingjue into joining their little fanclub. They didn't mind. The more the merrier, right?)

Lan Wangji glanced down, not wanting to meet his brother's omniscient gaze. "There is no such thing." He would appear to be unfazed if not for the slight redness at the tips of his ears.

"Denial is unhealthy." Wen Ruohan tutted.

"Mn." Lan Wangji agreed.

"His ears are red again!" A girl commented.

"Too cute! I might just die!"

"Yes! I'll die too!"

The screen switched to the bustling streets of Caiyi Town. Some ran their stalls whereas others peacefully conversed and friends merrily laughed with one another.

"Small streams and bridges. People living next to the water. Caiyi town is truly wonderful!" One of the Lan disciples commented.

"That sounds like something Huaisang would say." Nie Mingjue chuckled.

Meanwhile, Wei Wuxian's bright laughter echoed within the streets, lightening up the atmosphere, "We're so fortunate to be here! Thank god! Lan Zhan is busy hunting Water Ghouls. Lan Qiren went to attend the meeting held by the Nie Clan."

The screen showed Wei Wuxian and Jiang Cheng sitting at a table, eating frozen dessert.

"Good luck has come!" Wei Wuxian continued, "And there's no way to stop it!" He scooped up a spoonful of the food and happily moaned as it melted on his tongue.

"How positive!"

"He's right! Always look at the bright side of things!"

"When you have good luck, don't let anyone spoil it!"

"Good luck?" Jiang Cheng scoffed, his head lazily rested onto a palm, "You have offended the Lan Clan. When Lan Qiren comes back, he'll make you pay for it."

Wei Wuxian clicked his tongue with a grin, "Since you've covered for me so many times, this one time isn't a big deal.-"

Yu Ziyuan sneered, "That's exactly right. A-Cheng, why are you always the one clearing up that brat's mess? You're the master, he's the servant."

Her lips were slammed shut once again.

She sent a glare to the Lans, specifically Lan Wangji.

"-And who cares what'll happen in the future? Let's enjoy things while we can! We're in the thick of spring, and we have this delicious milky frozen dessert. Why not just

enjoy it?"

"Now that he mentions it, that frozen dessert looks delicious!"

"I want some!"

"Father, take me to Gusu!"

Jiang Cheng watched as he took another bite, "You're acting like you've never eaten frozen desserts before."

"Well.. Cloud Recess always starves people!" Wei Wuxian refuted, "If I could eat these amazing desserts every day, I wouldn't mind staying in Gusu. I really envy people who grow up with these frozen desserts."

Lan Wangji's ears perked at their conversation, "Will buy frozen desserts for Wei Ying."

Wei Wuxian cooed, "Lan Zhan, you're so precious. Thank you for doing that, husband!~"

Nie Mingjue stared holes into the couple. His eyes, however, had a strange glint to them.

"Come on," Jiang Cheng huffed, "If he made you copy books for another month, you would disappear faster than a rabbit."

Wei Wuxian simply stuck his tongue out in response.

"I bet shijie would love this!" He chirped, "We can come back here and bring some home with us!"

Jiang Cheng hummed in agreement.

Jiang Yanli smiled, "A-Cheng, A-Xian, you're so considerate."

Suddenly, an alluring scent wafted past Wei Wuxian's nose. He sniffed the air, trying to deduce the smell's origin. After a few moments passed, he spun around with a smile, "That smells like rice wine!"

"Truly one of us!" Wen Ruohan praised, "He can smell Rice Wine from that distance away! I really want to drink with him! Maybe we can on the day I adopt him."

"You mean 'Truly an *alcoholic* '." Jiang Cheng corrected, "He's too obsessed. Although we're cultivators and we can cleanse it out of our systems, it's still unhealthy."

He ran towards the docking, jumped into a boat and began to push forwards using the bamboo stick provided.

"Don't run so fast. You'll fall in the water." Jiang Cheng scolded.

Wei Wuxian grinned as he drifted further away, "Thanks for your concern!"

"Cheng-cheng is so adorable!" Wei Ying cooed, "He pretends to scold me but is actually just worried!"

"Worried?! Who said I was worried?" Jiang Cheng scoffed, incurring soft laughter from Jiang Yanli.

She fondly smiled, "I'm glad they're on good terms again. The scene I caused earlier didn't particularly help.."

Jin Zixuan shook his head, "You were just worried for A-Xian. Though, when you slapped A-Cheng, you looked really amazing!"

Jiang Yanli chuckled, "That wasn't really the response I was expecting but thank you anyways."

She got up from her seat and pulled Jiang Cheng and Wei Wuxian into a hug, "A-Cheng, sorry about earlier. A-Xian, keep teasing A-Cheng, his reactions are cute."

Wei Ying beamed, "See! Even Shijie agrees!"

Jiang Cheng gaped, "A-Jie!"

Jiang Yanli chuckled.

Meanwhile, Jiang Fengmian sent a triumphant smirk to Wen Ruohan that screamed: *Ha! Look at that! Whose son is he now?!*

Wen Ruohan yawned, "What's with that look Jiang Fengmian is sending me?--Anyways, my son is so cute, isn't he Huaisang?"

Nie Huaisang eagerly nodded, "A heartwarming family reunion! So precious! I need to paint this scene when everything is over!"

The screen switched to Wei Wuxian as he ran up to Lan Xichen and pointed to the river, "So it happened in this river path?"

"Finally getting serious?"

"He's been joking around so much that I forgot why they were even there."

"This water path leads to a large lake ahead, called Biling Lake." Lan Xichen answered, "Water ghouls have not haunted Caiyi Town in over ten years, but in the past few months, people often drowned in this river path and Biling Lake. Boats carrying goods have also been sinking."

"Damn."

"That's bad."

"That's really bad."

"I miss fairy."

Jin Ling received various unamused stares, "What?"

"Were arrays set up to catch the water ghouls?" Wei Wuxian questioned.

"Yes. A few days ago, I set up net arrays here. I thought that I could catch one or two, but there were more than a dozen Water Ghouls." Lan Xichen informed.

"A dozen?"

"Isn't that concerning? Shouldn't you like--get a big group of big boys and destroy them all in one go?"

"Big boys?"

"Strong cultivators, you know what I mean?"

"They're all turned from the people living here?" Jiang Cheng asked.

Lan Xichen shook his head, "I am afraid not. We cleaned the corpses, brought them to the town, and asked around. There were many corpses that nobody claimed. Yesterday, arrays were set up again. Even more of them were caught."

"Water ghouls become accustomed to specific regions of water. It's usually a single region, the region where they drowned. They never really leave it. Which is why the chance that they floated here from somewhere else isn't big." Wei Wuxian added.

The juniors quickly pulled out a blank talisman to jot down notes.

"That is correct. Thus, I felt that this was no simple matter and brought Wangji along, in preparation for mishaps."

Wen Ruohan nodded with approval, "Good choice, brother. Good choice."

The girls had an inkling that he wasn't talking about how Lan Xichen dealt with the Water Ghouls, but was saying that due to the fact he brought Lan Wangji along.

Lan Wangji watched them converse with an indecipherable expression.

"Why is he glaring at Wei Wuxian--No--Isn't he glaring at his brother?! Haha, he's drinking vinegar! Do you smell it?!"

"I smell it! It's so strong I think I might pass out!"

"+1" The girls added.

"+1"

"+1"

"+1"

The boats travelled across the water path and eventually entered Biling Lake.

"Woah, that's kind of pretty--"

Wei Wuxian put his hand into the water, letting a few strands of the Water Ghouls' remains coil around his palm.

He lifted it and narrowed his eyes in thought, "So we can't catch it by nets alone. If only there was something like a compass that can point out where the ghouls are."

"A compass.. That sounds familiar- OH GOD IT'S THE COMPASS OF EVIL!"

"Haha you fools! I now know the origin of the Compass of Evil!"

"So he'd been thinking of inventing it for quite a while?"

"It's a genius idea, if I do say so myself."

"Yeah, we can let him off. It's useful in nighthunts."

"Hey!" Jiang Cheng used his bamboo stick and splashed him with the water, "Focus on the water and look out for Water Ghouls. Don't start daydreaming."

"Sect Leader Jiang, so responsible. He's even able to stop the Yiling Patriarch from thinking of his evil business. I have a newfound respect for him."

Wei Wuxian chuckled, "Cultivation and controlling swords used to be lunatic ideas." He purposely moved his boat, letting it float towards Jiang Cheng's as he whispered, "I think the Water Ghouls appeared because Biling Lake is so full of resentment. Instead of catching a few Water Ghouls, why not address the resentment and then thoroughly solve this problem?"

"..."

"..."

"You reverse the natural order, ignore ethics and morality!" Lan Qiren was quickly sedated by Wen Qing before he spat out blood again.

Jiang Cheng shoved his boat away with a foot, "You're not getting enough from copying The Book of Discipline three times."

As if realizing what he'd just said, Wei Wuxian hastily covered his mouth with a hand and began to laugh awkwardly.

"He's been running his mouth to everyone about becoming a demonic cultivator, and it is only *now* that he realizes?"

It was then when he turned around to stare at Lan Wangji, that an abnormality was noticed.

"Of course he's staring at Lan Wangji. Of course!"

"An appropriate distraction!" Wen Ruohan approved.

Wei Wuxian waved, "Hey! Lan Zhan!" he broke into a series of jumping and splashing the water, "Look at me! Look at me!"

"Lan Wangji, oh Lan Wangji. Just give your wife a glance, he's husband starved!"

"How can you be so cold?!"

"So unattentive!"

Jiang Cheng looked like someone had just stolen the piece of food he'd saved for last, "Hey! Wei Wuxian, can't you be serious for once?!"

"I know that look! It's the look my father gave me when I said I wanted to buy the *Special Edition Cutsleeve Romantic Adventure* book three!!"

Ignoring Jiang Cheng's calls, Wei Wuxian lunged his bamboo stick towards the jade, resulting in a large wave erupting from the lake.

"Why are you doing that, Wei Wuxian?! Attacking your husband simply because he wasn't paying any attention is... Actually quite reasonable..."

Lan Wangji skillfully avoided the upcoming water and jumped onto Lan Xichen's boat, "How ridiculous!"

"Woah! Lan Wangji broadened his vocabulary once again! Wei Wuxian, you're simply too amazing!"

"He's right! First it was 'boring', then 'extremely boring', and now ' how ridiculous'! He isn't even using 'boring'! Such improvement!"

Wei Wuxian simply smiled and used the bamboo stick to turn the boat over, revealing three Water Ghouls that had clung onto the bottom.

"Water Ghouls." Lan Wangji stated.

"I take everything I had said back! He saved his husband! Lan Wangji, you better grovel at his feet and say thank you before I come there and smack some sense into you!"

The Lans were quick to get net arrays and had already begun to apprehend the Water Ghouls.

Lan Xichen bowed in thanks, "Young Master Wei, how did you know that they were under the boat?"

Wei Wuxian grinned, "Simple! The draft was different. He was the only one standing on the boat, yet the draft was larger than those of boats with two people on them. Something was definitely clinging to the bottom."

"I never would have thought of that! Wei Wuxian, you genius!"

"An expert indeed, Young Master Wei." Lan Xichen praised.

"The day is bright, the night is dark, and I don't know what's happening anymore."

"Were you not paying attention?"

"Idiot, you should have been. Now you won't understand a thing."

"Who's the idiot?! I just got distracted by.. Well.." The girl sent a few glances to where Wei Wuxian and Lan Wangji were too busy in their own world to notice anything.

Chapter End Notes

I started writing some of this at 2am and it's now 4am I'm gonna cry
About the A-Qing and Song Lan business, I'm pretty sure they didn't learn each other's names so imma just stick with "Miss" and "Daozhang"
Lan Xichen and Wen Ruohan will be best friends(brothers?) ok - You can't stop me \\\
(^-^)(^-^"))

Next Chapter: Waterborne Abyss

A quick question: Do you want me to follow the animation and make Wei Ying test his theory about resentful energy or just follow the original where he wasn't fully pulled under?

Biling Lake II - The Past

Chapter Summary

The Waterborne Abyss arrives!!

Chapter Notes

hi ok sorry for the late update i couldn't be bothered to write anything
life is so boring lol

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Wei Wuxian pushed his boat further ahead until he was in line with the one inhabited by the Twin Jades, "Lan Zhan, I didn't mean to splash water on you. Water Spirits are crafty. If I said anything, they'd hear me and run away."

"That's quite smart. I would have just yelled. He really thinks things through, doesn't he?"

Jiang Cheng snorted when he heard the last statement.

After receiving no response, he continued, "Hey, can you hear me? Lan Zhan? Lan-"

"He really just wants Lan Wangji to notice him, doesn't he?" Someone giggled.

A girl sighed, "These two are hopeless."

Wei Ying sighed into Lan Wangji's sleeve, "Lan Zhan, Lan Zhan, you were so beautiful I couldn't help myself. You were so fun to tease."

"Wei Ying is more beautiful."

"Lan Zhan is."

"Wei Ying."

"Lan Zhan."

"Wei Ying."

"Lan Zhan."

"Wei Ying."

"Go get a room!" Jiang Cheng yelled, "We're trying to watch something here!"

Lan Wangji held up a hand to silence him, focusing on the figures swimming underwater.

"There are more Water Ghouls underneath!" A Lan disciple shrieked.

"Oh god, are they going to be okay?"

"I hope they get through this!"

"Fighting!"

Water Ghouls climbed up onto their boats, trying to haul themselves on. Others were unfortunate enough to have their boat tipped over.

Jin Ling pulled a face, "The Water Ghouls look really disgusting. I wouldn't want to go near them."

Jingyi grimaced, "I'm glad I was born in this generation."

Nie Huaisang fanned himself with a hand, "I heard about what happened, but now seeing what it was like for myself, I can only praise past me for refusing their invitation to come."

Lan Wangji eyed the creature that persistently clung to the edge of his boat. He unsheathed bichen, pushed himself into the air, and sliced it in two.

"So elegant! So beautiful!" Wei Wuxian praised, "My husband is an immortal!"

The girls nodded in agreement.

"So attractive!"

"So cold!"

"So unapproachable!"

Multiple Water Ghouls climbed up onto the boat, their weight slightly tipping it over.

Before Lan Wangji could think to force them off with bichen, they were all eradicated in one fell swoop.

"They are so fast!" A familiar voice spoke in awe.

Lan Wangji turned around, only to see Wei Wuxian sheathing his sword with a click .

"Usually the husband protects the wife but I can live with this! A strong wife and strong husband sounds interesting!"

"A Power couple!" Wen Ruohan added.

There was an uncanny silence.

"What is the name of this sword?" Lan Wangji asked, staring at said sword.

"Whatever." Wei Wuxian replied, placing it on his back.

Those who understood stifled a laugh.

Others simply watched, gawking at the disrespectfulness.

"..." Lan Wangji stared with an indecipherable expression.

Wei Wuxian frowned, 'Did he not hear me?'

"Whatever." He repeated.

Lan Wangji pursed his lips, "The sword is spiritual. It is disrespectful to name it as one pleases."

"Exactly!"

"It's disrespectful!"

"Extremely disrespectful!"

"As much as I love you Wei Wuxian, I have to be on Lan Wangji's side this time."

"Ugh." Wei Wuxian sighed, "You don't get the joke? I didn't mean that you could call it whatever you wanted to. It's just that my sword's name really is 'Suibian'--'Whatever'.

"..."

"..."

"..."

Jingyi snorted, "Sorry to disrupt the silence, but that is *so A-Niang*."

Jin Ling huffed, "You're right, it sounds like something he'd do."

He took the sword and held it out to show Lan Wangji, "Here, take a look."

Lan Wangji held the sword and stared at the sheath with a blank expression. "..."

Many mirrored his expression. "..."

"So it really wasn't a joke?"

"I assumed the Yiling Patriarch would have a cooler name for his sword like Sect Leader Jiang's Sandu."

"I suppose it's unique.."

Taking it that he understood, Wei Wuxian retrieved the sword, "You want to ask me why it's called this, don't you? Everyone asks if there's a special meaning behind it. In reality, there's no special meaning at all."

"-When uncle Jiang gave me the sword and asked me what I was calling it, I came up with more than twenty names, but I wasn't pleased with any of them."

A chuckle, "Of course he rambles on about the backstory without asking Lan Wangji."

"He's leaving him no room to reply!"

"I decided that I could let Uncle Jiang name it for me, so I answered 'Whatever'.

"..."

Wen Ruohan chuckled, "Lan Wangji looks really unamused."

"But who could've known that after the sword was casted, these were the two characters engraved on it."

"I really don't know how to feel about this."

"Should I congratulate him?"

Wei Wuxian smiled, reminiscing at the memory, "Uncle Jiang said 'If this is the case, why not let the sword be called Subian?'"

"So Jiang Fengmian was in on it as well.."

"Actually, the name's kind of neat, isn't it?"

"It's a fine name, I suppose."

"Uniqueness can be beautiful."

"How absurd!" Lan Wangji berated.

"You really are too boring." Wei Wuxian sighed.

A girl rolled her eyes, "Yet you still follow him around like a little duckling."

"What a fun name this is. It's especially great for tripping up you serious ones. Works every time,ahaha!"

He suddenly paused and stared at the water beside the boat, "Lan Zhan, your boat!"

"Well done for staying alert, *A-Xian* ." Jiang Fengmian praised, sending a smirk to Wen Ruohan.

Yu Ziyuan clicked her tongue, "At least tell A-Cheng he did well. He's your son."

Lan Wangji swiftly unsheathed bichen and launched his sword into the lake, creating a large splash. "It missed?"

He beckoned bichen to come back while contemplating the lake.

"It came again!" Su She yelled.

"SU SHE?!" A disciple unsheathed their sword on instinct but startled at the cold blood flowing from their nose.

Wen Qing glared, "Everyone's being such idiots. I don't want an entire army of patients, thank you very much."

"..Sorry."

Su She sent his sword diving into the lake with a single command. When he was ready to call it back up, all he was met with was silence. "Where did the sword go?"

Su She paled, '*I can't summon it!*'

Everyone burst into laughter.

"It backfired! It actually backfired! He tried to imitate Lan Wangji but failed!"

"Such an idiot!"

A few stifled snorts erupted from the Lans.

A nearby disciple scoffed, "Su She, we have not even confirmed what the underwater creatures are. Why did you drive your sword into the water on your own?"

"I saw that Second Young Master also sent his sword.." He bit his lip, "I... I was too full of myself.."

"Indeed you were!"

"Die!"

"Idiot!"

"Su Shit, I hate you!"

Su She clenched his fists, "Su Shit? SU SHIT?! HOW DARE THEY!"

Jin Guangyao suppressed a chuckle.

With a timid expression, he glanced to Lan Wangji, who was standing as elegantly as usual.

"Imagine being so stupid that you compare yourself to Lan Wangji."

"Imagine!"

"Nobody can rival him, except from Wei Wuxian of course. But for us normal people, comparing yourself to him is like an insect comparing themselves to an animal. Don't do it or your self esteem will be as insignificant as Su She's existence."

"Agreed."

"Well spoken."

Suddenly, the water in their area darkened. Lan Wangji narrowed his eyes, "Head back, right now!"

"Why is that?" Lan Xichen questioned.

"The creatures of the waters led the boats to the center of Biling Lake on purpose."

"How does he know that?"

"I didn't get any signs."

The waves were no longer settled, causing the boats to sway and rattle.

"Damn."

"It's as rocky as my parents' relationship."

"What is happening?!" A disciple panicked.

Wei Wuxian frowned, "Why did the water change colour?"

"Someone drank too much water and couldn't hold it in-" Ouyang Zizhen was slapped on the head by his father, "What? Can't I make a joke?!"

"What is that?!" A disciple shrieked, pointing to the whirlpool.

"A whirlpool?!" Another panicked, "We are being sucked inside!"

"So many questions. Calm down, youngsters." Wen Ruohan tutted.

Lan Xichen eyed the boats that slowly sunk underneath the water's surface. "Mount your swords!" He ordered, jumping onto his own.

The Lan disciples followed suit, rising into the air and distancing themselves from the water.

It wasn't long after that Wei Wuxian noticed Su She struggling from where he stood on his boat.

Jiang Cheng pursed his lips, "I see where this is going."

Su She panicked and sent waves of Qi into his sword but to no avail.

Wei Wuxian lowered suibian so he was level with Su She and held out a hand, "Hold on!"

"NO!" Someone screamed, "Let him die!"

"Yeah! Let him die!" Another added.

Everyone in the room began chanting a series of either "Let go!" or "Die!" or "Scum!"

Su She clicked his tongue, "Bastards. If I weren't in hiding, I'd kill them all."

Jin Guangyao stiffly smiled. *'I love his enthusiasm but whether or not he has the ability is a different matter entirely.'*

Su She swiftly spun his head around and immediately grabbed the hand offered without a moment's hesitation.

Struggling to withhold the extra weight, Subian wavered.

"Drop him!"

"What is your husband supposed to do if you get hurt?!"

Wei Wuxian, as well as Su She, were both yanked down. Despite the danger, Wei Wuxian persistently held onto the Lan.

Jiang Cheng scoffed, "Wei Wuxian's hero complex is always getting the better of him."

'Just what in the world is this?!"

"Who cares?! Let the man go!"

Suibian lowered and lowered, causing the water to rise high above Su She's chest as he sank.

'I can't anymore..' Wei Wuxian felt his grip loosen as both arms felt like they were being forcefully yanked out of their sockets.

"You'll get hurt!"

"Wei Wuxian!"

Just before Su She was fully sucked in, a hand grabbed Wei Wuxian by his collar.
"Huh?"

He spun his head around, only for his eyes to collide with two piercing gold ones, "Lan Zhan?!"

"AHHHHHHHHHHH!" The girls screamed.

"Thank goodness!"

"The husband to the rescue!"

"Lan Wangji saved him!"

"Wei Wuxian, you're so lucky! If your husband was a second later, you'd be drowning already!"

"Well done Lan Wangji!"

"Congratulations!"

"You saved your wife! +8 points!"

Lan Xichen turned to the Lans, "Retreat as soon as possible!"

"Yes!"

"It is a Waterborne Abyss." Lan Wangji deduced.

Wen Ruohan frowned, "It shouldn't be able to grow in Caiyi Town. The people there are known for being good with water. Just what on Earth..?"

"That would make things difficult." Lan Xichen sighed.

"A Waterborne Abyss is extremely powerful. I feel bad for Sect Leader Lan. So young yet he has so many responsibilities."

When they were far away from the lake, everyone dismounted their swords.

Lan Xichen and Lan Wangji shared a glance.

"A Waterborne Abyss?" A Lan disciple questioned.

"Most of the people around Caiyi Town are good with water," Another added, "A Waterborne Abyss cannot possibly grow from this area!"

Many nodded in agreement.

"It should be impossible."

"Why did one grow all of a sudden?"

"This happened years ago, don't fret about it."

"I agree. The past is the past. It's probably already been dealt with since this happened decades ago."

"But the suspense is fun!"

"It's like a mystery that we need to uncover!"

Jiang Cheng narrowed his eyes, "Because a Waterborne Abyss appeared here, there's only one possibility.."

"It was chased here from somewhere else." Wei Wuxian added, "Once a Waterborne Abyss grows, it means that the whole body of water is turned into a monster, and is extremely difficult to exterminate."

"Unless every single drop of water is taken out, all of the people and goods that sank are fished up, and the riverbed is exposed to strong sunlight for quite a few years. But these tasks are near impossible to do."

Lan Jingyi pulled a face, "Every single drop of water?! How on Earth would you manage that?!"

"However, there is one method that can solve the immediate problem at the expense of others--Chase it to another river or lake and let it wreck somewhere else."

"Who would think of doing such a thing?!"

"No honorable cultivator would do that! They'd *die* trying to exterminate it!"

Lan Wangji spun his head around to Lan Xichen, "Has anywhere suffered from a Waterborne Abyss lately?"

Lan Xichen stayed silent and simply pointed to the sky.

Everyone instantly understood.

'The QishanWen Sect.'

Wen Ruohan was sent many glares.

He raised an eyebrow, "What? Why are you looking at me? I didn't do anything."

After the glares didn't subside, he continued, "It wasn't by my orders, at least."

"Too bad for Caiyi Town that they chased the Waterborne Abyss here." A Lan disciple sighed.

"Why didn't we know about this? We weren't informed that the Wen Sect had done that."

Lan Xichen sighed, "At the time, their influence on the cultivation world was far too great for us to oppose. Accusing them of such a thing would be the same as digging your own grave."

"If the Waterborne Abyss grows larger and expands to the town's river paths, all those people's lives would be in the monster's hands. This really is.."

"That's quite dangerous.."

A sigh, "This is the responsibility us cultivators carry--Lives."

Wei Wuxian crossed his arms, "Since *their* Sect is the one that did it, no matter how much we accuse them, it's going to be useless."

"First, they won't admit it. Second, there won't be any compensation anyways." Jiang Cheng pointed out.

"That's a good point. Back then, the Wen Sect were so arrogant to the point that no one dared to oppose them. Anyone who did, well, had their life ended much sooner."

Lan Xichen shook his head, "Let it be, let it be. We should head back first. Let us deal with this after your teacher returns."

"He ended the conversation so smoothly. That's admirable."

The screen switched to Cloud Recess, where Wei Wuxian once again strolled around while being followed by Jiang Cheng, Nie Huaisang, and a few disciples.

"They're like little fans, following Wei Wuxian around like that."

"It's kind of cute!"

"A Waterborne Abyss grew in Caiyi Town?! Now things are gonna be difficult.." Nie Huaisang tutted.

"You can't exterminate something like this, but the Lan Sect can't chase it somewhere else like the Wen Sect did either." Wei Wuxian reminded, clearly not pointing out the information he got incorrect.

"It's an extreme difficulty." Jiang Cheng added, though was unjustly ignored.

Nie Huaisang beamed, "But because of this, now we're free!"

Wei Wuxian shrugged, "You're absolutely right. The Lan Sect's leader is practicing secluded meditation most of the time, and the old man is drained of energy because of this."

The two jades seemed to deflate at the mention of the previous Sect Leader.

Wei Wuxian whispered a silent 'sorry'.

"The time he spends teaching us is getting shorter and shorter too. Now he's got no time to watch over us!"

Lan Wangji lightly sighed, "Uncle worked hard raising me and XiongZhang. He didn't have to take the responsibility and yet he did."

Wei Wuxian smiled, "I feel bad for putting him through all of that trouble. But he's quite the man for raising my husband and making him so adorable."

Wei Wuxian patted Nie Huaisang's back, "Let's go, let's go! Today let's wander around the mountain again."

As they walked past the Library Pavilion, Wei Wuxian glanced up and stared at the figure in white reading a book.

"Even Wei Wuxian can't resist his beauty!"

"I understand why he's known as boring, though. Who reads a book in their spare time when they could be doing other things?!"

Lan Wangji turned his head, only to be met with Wei Wuxian's blinding smile. It wasn't the same one he had after fooling around, however, but was instead a much calmer, softer smile.

Jiang Cheng choked, "You look like a lovestruck maiden."

Wei Wuxian grinned, "Am I not?"

Lan Wangji let himself drink in the sight.

"He's watching Wei Wuxian with those eyes again! So beautiful!"

"They are officially soulmates! You can't change my mind!"

Wen Ruohan nodded, "I agree. Maybe instead of a war, we could have worked on shoving these two together."

"There'd most certainly still be a war against YunmengJiang if you keep your claws near A-Xian." Jiang Fengmian muttered under his breath.

Yu Ziyuan glared, "Don't joke about things like that Fengmian. That's our Sect you're talking about! ..And to think you used to be Sect Leader."

"A-Cheng's Sect." Jiang Fengmian corrected, "Besides, it wasn't much of a joke--"

--FENGMIAN!"

Jiang Fengmian seemed to cower at her fury, "..Okay, okay. Calm down, my lady. I didn't mean it."

"Oh. My. Goodness." A girl clutched at her chest, "I might die."

Her friend shook her head, "A-Yu, I won't be able to light incense for you, sorry. Though, I can ask to be buried in the same grave!"

'A-Yu' hugged her friend, "Bestie, let's die together!"

"Yes!"

Lan Wangji wrapped Wei Wuxian in a tight embrace, "Wei Ying put himself in danger again."

Wei Ying let himself bathe in the love of his husband, "Sorry, Lan-er-gege. Thank you for saving me, my handsome knight."

Lan Wangji smiled, "Always."

Jiang Cheng scowled, "Wei Wuxian and his hero complex. He's always putting himself in danger while trying to save someone else."

'A-Yu' gaped, "You-"

Nie Huaisang quickly shushed her, "Jiang-Xiong is just worried for Wei-Xiong. It is a special condition called *Jiang-Xiong's aggressive affection for Wei-Xiong* . JXAAFWX for short."

'A-Yu' sighed in understanding, "I see. So he is just angry externally..." She grabbed out a piece of paper and began to scribble notes onto it.

Nie Huaisang paused, "Miss, what are you doing?"

She looked up, "Taking notes."

"..What for?" Nie Huaisang asked. *Oh*, how he desperately wanted his fan.

She smiled, "He reminds me of my dog called Xiao Putao."

"...Who names their dog Xiao Putao?" Nie Huaisang was definitely sure this woman was a gender-bend of Jiang-Xiong. (He'd read books like that, okay?!) First it was the 'I'll break your legs' and now it's the weird naming (Who names their dog Little Grape?!).

They're a match made in heaven!

"What's your name?" He asked. If he was going to set Jiang-Xiong up, he needed a name at least.

"Li Daiyu." She answered.

Nie Huaisang blinked, "Is there a reason you don't take your Sect's surname?"

She shrugged, "I'm not in any Sect."

"Then why are you--"

"I was with my brother." She cut him out, grinning, "I jumped onto his back to annoy him but we were suddenly taken here. I suppose it was because I was touching him at the time."

Nie Huaisang began to fan himself with his hand, "I see, I see. Are you married?"

"No."

Nie Huaisang seriously would knock some sense into this girl if he had his fan. Why was she answering such private questions so easily? Where's the sense of security? First she was weeping on his shoulder, *a man's shoulder*, and now this..

"So.. What are the notes for?" He asked. If this girl was really interested in Jiang-Xiong, then it could work! Taking notes on a boy means they like him, right?

Li Daiyu smiled, "I'm thinking of a nickname. Xiao Putao has JXAAFWX like Sect Leader Jiang. I'm thinking of naming him Angry Grape."

Nie Huaisang pulled a face, "How did you remember that--Anyways, why isn't it something like 'Handsome Jiang' or 'Purple Sect Leader'--"

He paused.

Okay, that sounded quite lame.

"Tell me what name you have come up with later, okay?" Nie Huaisang internally patted himself on the back. He could first become friends with her and then matchmaking her with Jiang-Xiong.

Things would go great. (Nothing ever does for Nie Huaisang.)

Chapter End Notes

nie huaisang tries to use his intelligence to set jiang cheng up with a girl but it will obviously backfire

I don't know much about chinese names I just made up a random one using the internet so forgive me if it doesn't fit

i feel like nie huaisang doesn't know what to use his intelligence for anymore lol

Next Chapter: The end of the Cloud Recess arc (yay!) (¤♪∀♪¤)

Appreciation I - The Past

Chapter Summary

Wei Wuxian giving Lan Wangji rabbits, Jin Zixuan being a peacock

Chapter Notes

ok my mdzs yiling patriarch cosplay arrived and omg i look so handsome i-sandalwood incense smells so nice!! i see why wwx was so obsessed with lwj's smell Happy birthday Yibo <3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Wei WuXian was shown as he climbed up a tree and grabbed onto the balcony. On the other side, of course, was Lan Wangji.

Wei WuXian cheerfully waved, even as he hung off of the balcony, "Lan Zhan, I'm back! How have you been without me copying scriptures with you? Miss me?"

"Mn." Lan Wangji hummed.

Wei Wuxian giggled, "Lan-er-gege, I missed you too!"

Jiang Cheng made a choking sound.

Lan Wangji remained indifferent, not sparing Wei Wuxian even a glance, "Leave."

Wei WuXian grinned, "If I don't, will you throw me down?"

Lan Wangji slammed his book shut.

"Lan Wangji has had enough."

"He's definitely had enough."

"His patience wears thin, yet Wei Wuxian insisted on fanning the flames. This is simply the consequence; being shunned by your man."

"Don't be so scary!" Wei WuXian chuckled, "I'm here to apologize by giving you presents."

Jiang Cheng scoffed, "Apologize? Wei Wuxian, I never knew that word existed in your dictionary."

Wei Wuxian shook his head and rubbed his heart, "Jiang Cheng, I have a *big* heart. I apologize for my mistakes *all* the time."

Lan WangJi sternly replied, "No need."

"You really don't want them?" There was a hint of disappointment in Wei WuXian's tone.

"Hmm.." The girls seemed to be staring at his face, trying to find something.

"Now now girlies, let's not be too hasty. We can say that Lan Wangji is an easy person, but Wei Wuxian has yet to recognise him as his soulmate." Wen Ruohan tutted.

"You're as smart as ever, Senior Wen!"

"How could we not have realised? Wei Wuxian isn't slow to fall in love, but Lan Wangji is simply too easy!"

Lan Wangji's ears flushed as he mumbled under his breath, "Not easy.."

"..." Lan WangJi decided to remain silent.

Despite Lan Wangji's refusal, Wei WuXian began to shuffle a hand through his robes, grabbing at something hidden within them. He pulled out two large rabbits, one black and one white, and presented them with a smile.

"They're black and white! Wei Wuxian and Lan Wangji's colours! Truly a match made in heaven!"

The juniors paused, a flash of realization flickering through their eyes.

Ouyang Zizhen's jaw dropped, "Hanguang-Jun's rabbits in the back mountain... Are they..."

Sizhui nodded, face still mid-gasp, "A-Niang must have given him them.."

Wei WuXian climbed onto the ledge and sat down on it, getting himself comfortable. He cradled the two rabbits in his arms, "It's really quite weird here. There are no pheasants, but there's a lot of wild rabbits. They aren't even scared of people."

"So how about it?!" He shoved them both into Lan Wangji's face, holding them by the ears, "Fat, aren't they? You want them?"

Lan WangJi blankly stared at the two rabbits with an indecipherable expression.

Wei WuXian shrugged, "Fine. If you don't want them, then I'll give them to someone else. The food here has been too mild, anyways."

The juniors broke into gasps.

"Senior Wei, how could you think of doing such a thing?!"

"Those poor, innocent rabbits!"

"Killing is forbidden in Cloud Recess!"

"A-Niang, don't say that in front of A-Die!"

"Hanguang-Jun will skin you alive!"

"Stop!" Lan WangJi interferred, "To whom are you giving them?!"

"I'm not sure if he's just jealous, or if he's more worried about Senior Wei roasting them.."

Wei Wuxian let himself present a grin, "Whoever's the best at roasting rabbits."

"Killing is forbidden in Cloud Recess. It is the third rule on the wall." Lan WangJi reasoned.

"Yes! Hanguang-Jun, you must stop him!"

"Fighting!"

Wei WuXian clearly didn't mind, because he found a way to bend the rule anyway, "Fine. I'll go down the mountain, kill them outside, and then bring them back to roast it."

The Lans despaired, "Noooooooo!"

They'd grown fond of Hanguang-Jun's rabbits. The cute things were too adorable to kill!

"It's not like you want them, so why do you care so much about them?"

"You really don't know anything, do you, Wei Wuxian?"

"How can someone be so smart yet so dumb at the same time?"

Jiang Cheng snorted, "Trust me, I wonder that too."

Lan Wangji clenched his hands into fists, tightly gripping his robes, "Give them to me."

Wei Wuxian cocked his head to the side, "Hm? You want them now? Look at you, you're always like this."

He gently (?) set the rabbits down onto Lan WangJi's paperwork (!!) and watched as they tred muddy footprints (!??) all over the white sheet (!!!). After a while, they settled down and began eating their lettuce.

"That's Lan Wangji's work!"

"It's ruined!"

Wei Wuxian giggled, "Lan Zhan!"

"What's with the sudden enthusiasm? I'm getting a bad premonition.."

Lan Wangji, "What?"

Wei WuXian watched the rabbits in interest, "Look at them; one is on top of the other. Are they..."

"WEI WUXIAN!" Jiang Cheng hysterically yelled.

Wei Ying innocently shrugged, "What? They're just bunnies, what's the problem?"

"You're so shameless!"

Wei Wuxian grinned, "I thought you already knew that, Jiang Cheng!"

"You- Get here right now!"

Wei Wuxian helplessly clung to his husband and squealed, "Lan Zhan, save me! A scary man is trying to take me away! He's trying to separate us!"

Lan Wangji hugged Wei Wuxian tightly, "Will save Wei Ying."

Jiang Cheng pointed a trembling finger at the couple, "You've corrupted Lan Wangji, you've corrupted Nie Huaisang, and you've even corrupted *Wen Ruohan* of all people!"

Wen Ruohan turned his head at the mention of his name, "What was that, Angry Purple Lotus?"

Jiang Cheng seemed to turn even redder in anger. (And yes, that shade of red indeed existed).

"Angry Purple Lotus?! What idiot came up with that name?! You- You've all been corrupted!"

Li Daiyu decided to join in the conversation, "Ay? I'm the genius who made the name, for your information. Did you need something, Angry Purple Lotus?"

Nie Huaisang peeked over from behind Li Daiyu, whom he was hiding behind, "Jiang-Xiong! You look a bit red, did you need some water?"

Jiang Cheng clenched his fists, deciding to remain silent. "..."

Lan Xichen watched with a twinkle of amusement in his eyes, "Young Master Jiang, would you like to sit back down?"

Wei WuXian frowned, "I was having so much fun teasing- I mean *talking* to Jiang Cheng that I forgot what just happened."

"We were at the-'They look like me and you! One of them is on top of the other. Are they doing the **forbidden loquat**?" Nie Huaisang said, making sure to use emphasis on the last two words.

Jiang Cheng rolled his eyes, "He didn't say that, don't change it how you like."

"Both of these are male!" Lan Wangji quickly reasoned.

Wen Ruohan chuckled, "These rabbits describe wangxian in every way. Lan Wangji, denial is unhealthy."

The girls nodded in agreement, "Senior Wen, your wisdom is truly unrivaled!"

"Male?" Wei Wuxian hummed, "How befuddling."

"Wei Wuxian, you need to broaden your world views. Girls aren't everything, you know! And don't think I do not know about how you flirted with girls all the time back then! Rumors are powerful!" Li Daiyu said.

Nie Huaisang frowned, "Girls aren't everything? Aren't you a girl too? Wait. Then...Then are you actually a ma-"

His mouth was quickly covered by a hand.

Wei Wuxian held the two rabbits by the ears and examined them, "They really are male!"

"You didn't need to look at their...Uh....*things* to know that, Wei Wuxian.."

"So shameless..."

Wei WuXian leaned over into Lan Wangji, an arm resting over the latter's shoulder, "Males then, males. Why are you so serious? Speaking of, I'm the one who caught them, and I haven't even noticed whether they're male or female.."

A smirk crept its way up his face, "Just where are you looking at?"

The crowd burst into laughter.

"Lan Wangji, try to deny that!"

Wen Ruohan chuckled, "Haha! He got you this time, Lan Wangji."

Still unconscious, Lan Qiren somehow managed to lift a finger, "Sh..Shameless."

Lan Wangji glared at the rabbits as if they stole his kidneys and ran away with them.

Everyone felt a cold breeze blow up their skin.

"Scary." Nie Huaisang squeaked.

Sensing that Lan WangJi was about to snap, Wei WuXian jumped out of the window with bright laughter.

Lan WangJi slammed his hand onto the desk, "GET LOST!"

"Lan Wangji loses his composure the more he stays with Wei Wuxian. Haha, it proves how much Wei Wuxian has had an impact on him!"

He sat down and facepalmed, his face bright red.

"Is he just angry or embarrassed?"

"Hmm.. I think it's a bit of both."

The next day, Lan WangJi stopped going to class with them.

"What!? Why?! When?! How?!"

"Calm down, it doesn't mean he's in seclusion or anything. He just won't be attending classes."

Nie Huaisang beamed, "Speaking of, Senior W- I mean Wen Ruohan! Have you heard of the famous bunnies in Cloud Recess?"

Wen Ruohan raised an eyebrow, "Hm?"

The girls leaned closer, "What?"

Nie Huaisang happily beckoned them over and whispered as if it were a secret, "Pets are forbidden in Cloud Recess. However, Lan Wangji owns a large Colony of them!"

Everyone broke into scandalous gasps.

"Oh my!"

"Lan Wangji broke the rules?!"

"Why would he do such a thing?!"

"I could tell that he loved rabbits from the way he stared at them, but I never would have guessed!"

"That's not the best part," Nie Huaisang grinned, "And they originated from the two bunnies Wei Wuxian gave him!"

"No way!"

"That's so romantic!"

"Doesn't that mean they have an entire colony of children?!"

"Amazing!"

"As expected of Wangxian!"

In Cloud Recess, there was a long wall of hollowed-out windows. On every window of the wall is carved the life of each ancestor of the GusuLan Clan. And the oldest and most famous four windows told the life of the founder of the Lan Sect, Lan An.

The founder of the GusuLan Clan grew up in the temple as a devoted buddhist. He was clever, gifted, dedicated and extraordinary. His sermons attracted many people far and wide, many admired his wisdom and piety. At the age of 20, he resumed secular life, changed his surname to "Lan" and became a musician who wrote and played music. He traversed the world, cultivating. When he arrived in Gusu, he met the "Fated Person" and got married. Together they established the Lan Clan. After his wife died, he went back to the temple and died within its walls.

"So much information."

"My head hurts."

"It just shows how smart the Sect Heirs were to understand it!"

"Or maybe you're just idiots."

Wei Wuxian exhaled a breath in understanding, "So the founder of the GusuLan Sect was a monk--No wonder.. He ventured into the mortal world to meet one person, and she went, he went as well, leaving nothing behind in this world. But why would a person like him produce such unromantic descendants?"

"Unromantic?" A girl scoffed.

"Wei Wuxian, you dense idiot. I wish I could go back in time and slap some sense into you."

"I'm more interested in the 'fated person' he became cultivation partners with." A nearby disciple added.

"What kind of person could move the heart of the Lan Sect's founder?"

"Speaking of which, from all of the cultivator girls, which one do you think is the best?"

The girls watching glared, "Typical boys; only interested in girls. Maybe you should focus on your studies for once so you won't be so stupid."

"..."

"Didn't the subject of this conversation change a bit too much?"

"I agree. How on earth did discussing GusuLan ancestors turn into courting girls?!"

A disciple turned to Jin Zixuan, who was standing idly beside the window, staring outside, "Zixuan-Xiong, which girl do you think is the best?"

Madam Jin sighed. She knew her son well enough to confidently say that he would speak bad about Jiang Yanli without batting an eye.

"You shouldn't have asked Zixuan-Xiong about something like this. He's already got a fiance, so his answer has to be his fiance."

"Really? Which sect is she from? She must be extremely beautiful!"

Jin Zixuan scoffed, "Forget it."

Both Wei WuXian and Jiang Cheng felt their blood rush to their heads, "WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY 'FORGET IT'?!"

Both Jin Zixuan and Wei Wuxian paled. They knew where this was going.

The disciples in the corner stepped back timidly, intimidated by the two.

"Is the phrase 'forget it' too difficult to understand?" Jin Zixuan sneered.

Wei Wuxian clenched his fists, "The phrase itself isn't hard to understand. Rather, it's hard to understand why in the world you're so unsatisfied with my Shijie."

"What? Jin Zixuan's fiance is Jiang Yanli of the YunmengJiang Sect?" A disciple asked, disappointed.

"With Jin Zixuan's circumstances, it's true that she's a bit unsuitable." Another added.

Wei Wuxian glared at the disciples on the screen.

"It's all because her mother and Jin Zixuan's mother come from sects that were close to each other. The two madams played together ever since they were young. They had a good relationship.."

Jiang Cheng stepped forward to berate them, but was stopped by Wei WuXian's interfering arm.

Yu Ziyuan muttered, 'At least the brat did something right for once', in which everyone heard. It was followed by a small 'Thank You', though no one could hear due to the quiet voice.

Jin Zixuan raised an eyebrow, "Why don't you ask me how in the world could I be satisfied with her?"

Jiang Yanli seemed to deflate as she held her head down.

Jin Zixuan hugged her tighter.

Jin Ling froze, recalling the taunts of the children years ago.

"Orphan! Orphan!"

"You had a mom to give birth to you, but not one to raise you!"

"Your mother was no good, even your father didn't like her!"

"They abandoned you!"

Jin Ling broke out of his daze when he felt a hand on his shoulder.

He glanced up, only to meet the familiar eyes of his mother, "A-Ling, we love you. Back then, things between your father and I were.. *Complicated.*"

Jin Zixuan smiled, "I love your mother more than anything. At this point in time, I was just unaware of how amazing she was."

Jiang Yanli sent her husband a warm smile.

Wei Wuxian felt his blood boil in fury as he stepped forward to be face to face with Jin Zixuan, "You sure think that you're pretty satisfying, don't you? Where did you get the guts to be all choosy here?!"

Jin Zixuan cockily raised his head, "What? Am I wrong? If she's unsatisfied, then tell her to get rid of this engagement! If you like her so much, then why don't you talk to her father about it? If you want her, I don't think he'd object."

Jin Ling bit his lip.

Jin Zixuan felt his stomach churn. Back then, he thought he had the world under his feet, and deserved only the best. It's only now that he realizes how lucky he was, *and is*. "A-Xian, A-Li, I apologise for being so insensitive.."

Li Diayu stood up from where she sat and began to storm over to Jin Zixuan.

Before she could get any closer, Nie Huaisang shamelessly clung onto her leg, "Ai!! Li-Guniang, calm down! Jin-Xiong and Jiang-Guniang are best friends now! I mean- They're a happily married couple! Jin-Xiong apologized to her already!"

Unaware of the two, Jin Zixuan paused, "...A-Li, I'm sorry about before. I never had the chance to apologize."

Jiang Yanli smiled, "It's alright, I've already forgiven you."

"See?!" Nie Huaisang was now clinging onto Li Daiyu's leg for dear life, "He's already apologized! Let's sit back down!"

Li Daiyu pursed her lips, "The stupid peacock apologized literally just this moment."

Seeing that he could not stop her advances, Nie Huaisang threw all of his pride out of the window and began sobbing onto her leg, "Jin-Xiong has a child now! You can't kill him! What will the little mistress do without his father?"

Li Daiyu paused.

She huffed, "Fine. But if he pulls a stunt like that again.." She signalled a hand to her neck.

Nie Huaisang paled, before hastily nodding, "Yes! Yes, I understand!" He internally noted to warn Jin-Xiong in the future.

Wei Wuxian felt his self-restraint snap.

"It's known how much Maiden Jiang cared for the Yiling Patriarch. I suppose the feeling was mutual."

"It's understandable why he killed Jin Zixuan. He's such a bastard. Probably takes after his father."

Obviously, those people hadn't met Jin Zixuan nor his father.

"But then.. Why did Wei Wuixian kill Maiden Jiang?"

"Doesn't he treat you better than his own child, or-?" Before Jin Zixuan could finish, Wei Wuxian's fist was launched into his face, sending him stumbling back.

Jin Zixuan instinctively clutched a hand to his face, the phantom pain too frightening.

"Oh no! They're fighting!" A disciple panicked.

Wei Wuxian grabbed him by the collar, uncaring for the onlookers, and repeatedly punched him black and blue.

Jiang Yanli gasped, "A-Xian! A-Xuan!" She had heard about what happened, but seeing it for herself was a bit disturbing.

Wei Wuxian pouted, "Sorry, shijie..."

He then glanced to Jin Zixuan, "Sorry about that.."

Jin Zixuan smiled, about to reply with an 'It's fine, I deserved it' but was immediately cut out, "You deserved it though, how dare you insult my shijie!"

Jin Zixuan deflated. It sounded much worse when someone else said it. "I was a jerk, no need to point it out.."

"Outrageous!" Lan Qiren yelled, despite it being one of the rules, "Cloud Recess is not a place for you to fight!"

Wen Ruohan snorted, "That old fart has always been so stiff. He's somehow everywhere yet nowhere at the same time. If there's a fight, or if someone is breaking the rules of Cloud Recess, he'd appear. Or one of his nephews.."

The fight was a shock to both of the two prominent sects. Jiang Fengmian and Jin Guangshan hastened to Gusu from Yunmeng and Lanling on the day. They cancelled the engagement between Jiang Yanli and Jin Zixuan.

Jin Ling gasped, "What-"

Jiang Yanli quickly shushed him, "Don't worry, it was only temporary.."

Jiang Fengmian's voice was heard, "A-Li's mother was the one who insisted on having this engagement in the first place. Looking at it now, as either of them are keen, it's best if we don't force it."

Jiang Fengmian sent a smirk to Wen Ruohan, *'Do you see now?! I'm an amazing father!'*

Wen Ruohan was too busy watching the screen to pay him a glance.

Jin Guangshan, "Jiang-Xiong, If you think so, then..."

"Eww! Is that Jin Guangshan I see?"

"Disgusting! I need to clean my eyes!"

Madam Jin's atmosphere darkened at the mention of her husband.

The screen switched to the ancestral shrine, where Wei WuXian was kneeling on the floor, repenting for the previous fight.

Jiang Cheng approached with a sneer, "Look who's being so well-behaved."

Yu Ziyuan raised an eyebrow, "So he's wild when he's with us, but obedient for them? When he came back to Lotus Pier, he didn't seem so disciplined."

Wei WuXian grinned, "Of course. I kneel all the time. But Jin Zixuan is a spoiled brat, so he's definitely never kneeled before. If I don't make him kneel so long that he cries for his parents, my last name won't be Wei anymore."

"-I heard that he values his face as much as a peacock does. I wonder what he'll think after he looks in the mirror. Ahaha!"

Jin Zixuan shivered at the memory.

He paused for a brief moment, "So that's why they started calling me peacock..."

Jiang Cheng held one wrist with the other hand, showing how his palm was clenched into a fist, "I wanted to hit him as well. If you never stopped me, the other side of Jin Zixuan's face would also be ruined."

Yu Ziyuan glared at Jiang Cheng, "A-Cheng! Do not speak so improperly in public!"

Jiang Cheng sighed, "A-Niang, that was years ago. I'm a Sect Leader now, of course I know that."

Briefly, Yu Ziyuan seemed to appear a bit saddened. As quick as the flash of emotion appeared, it dissipated into nothing. (If she was sad about how much time she missed watching her children grow up, she denied it.)

Meanwhile, Jin Zixuan blinked, "Uh.. I don't really know how to feel about my brother-in-law wanting to punch me in the face when my other brother-in-law had already done so."

"Aren't you supposed to be scared? It was clearly a threat!"

Wei WuXian waved his hand in a dismissive manner, "If you have time, go visit Jin Zixuan and look at how idiotic he looks kneeling. No need to stay with me. If Lan WangJi comes again, you'll be caught by him."

"Again?"

"So he means Lan Wangji has come there before?"

"Why didn't we see it?! I want to see that!"

"Lan Wangji?" Jiang Cheng asked in a bewildered tone, "Why did he come? He even dared to come find you?"

Wei WuXian earnestly nodded, "Yeah, I also thought that he should be praised for having the courage to come find me. He was probably told by his uncle to come and check if I was kneeling properly."

"Oh."

"Well.."

"That's a bit disappointing. I thought he would have gone there to see if his wife was doing okay. Or maybe to bring him some snacks.."

Jiang Cheng crossed his arms, "Then were you kneeling properly?"

Wei Wuxian held up a finger, "I was kneeling properly at the time. After he was some distance away, I found a stick and started to dig around in the dirt." He pointed to the pile of mud on the floor, "That pile right there."

"It seems that Wei Wuxian has some very.. *Peculiar* interests.."

Jiang Cheng raised an eyebrow, "Why?"

"When he turned around to look at me and saw that my shoulders were shaking, he definitely thought I was crying or something. Then he came to ask me and placed a hand on my shoulder. You should have seen his expression when he saw the ant hole, ahahah!"

The girls cooed and screamed at the same time, if that was even possible.

"So cute! I might just Qi Deviate!"

"You idiot! You aren't even a cultivator-" They glanced to the screen once again, recalling what Wei Wuxian had said, "..Never mind, can I Qi Deviate alongside you?"

Jiang Cheng sighed, "You should get lost and go back to Yunmeng as soon as possible. I don't think he'd ever want to see you again."

Li Daiyu scoffed, "He'd never want to see Wei Wuxian again?! May I say, Sect Leader Jiang, that Lan Wangji craves his husband as much as you crave having a wife!"

"Pfft, jokes on you, Sect Leader Jiang!"

"A-Yu, you're so sassy!"

"Aren't I just?" Li Daiyu flicked her hair behind her shoulder.

Nie Huaisang chuckled.

And so, on that night, Wei WuXian packed up his things and returned to Yunmeng with Jiang Fengmian.

The screen faded into black.

"So that's episode four over, eh?"

"That went by quite quickly."

"How long do you think we'll be here?"

"Don't ask me! How should I know?!"

Nie Huaisang crossed his arms.

This wasn't working.

Jiang-Xiong has a serious condition of JXAAFWX (*Jiang-Xiong's aggressive affection for Wei-Xiong*). It's so serious that it can't be treated.

How was he supposed to pair them? Just earlier, Li Daiyu roasted the shit out of him-

Anyways, they have so much in common but are like water and oil. They seem compatible but don't have that *click*.

What should he do, ah?

Chapter End Notes

u might have noticed that i've made nie huaisang into shang qinghua 2.0
sorry i've been into scum villain lately and can't help it-
we need some family bonding with jin ling ok it's so beautiful

Next Chapter: The present! Finally! $\geq(\nabla^{\wedge})\leq$

Prelude I - The Present

Chapter Summary

Lan Wangji and Wei Wuxian begin their journey of finding a corpse d(>_<)

Chapter Notes

my drafts keep getting mixed up and it's such a pain
one time i accidentally posted a draft and omg i panicked so much

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Lan Qiren spluttered out a mouthful of blood, finally conscious.

Wen Qing slapped his back, "Get all the bad blood out. I'm going to seal your meridians in a minute to stop you from Qi Deviating again. You've lost so much blood that it's surprising you're even alive."

Lan Qiren glanced at her, a small nod in thanks. Even if she was a Wen, he still needed to be respectful. "Thank you.."

Wen Qing helped him lay against the wall, "Lan Qiren, how on earth did you manage to Qi Deviate to this extent? Your meridians are such a mess right now and your cultivation is possibly permanently damaged."

Lan Qiren's eyebrow twitched at the memory, "Wei Wuxian, that troublemaker. He's the reason for everything."

Wen Qing gave him an unimpressed stare, "I'm honestly not surprised at this point. You so-called righteous people only see what you're told to. And yet, even though he's your nephew-in-law, you still don't see the real him."

Lan Qiren scoffed, "Real him, you say? The brat is exactly like his mother. Worse, even. If only my nephew wasn't so bewitched, I'd have kicked him out of Cloud Recess long ago."

Wen Qing sighed, "We're watching his life, are we not? We can even hear his thoughts." She raised an eyebrow, "And we have yet to hear a single dark thought. All he's been doing is playing around. He's being a troublemaker, yes, but can you really say that he's evil?"

Lan Qiren pursed his lips, stubbornly turning away, "...I'll think about it. But he hasn't tinkered with resentful energy so far. If you can still call him innocent later on, you may spit

my words right back in my face."

Wen Qing internally snorted, '*I look forward to that.*'

Song Lan walked up to Jingyi, A-Qing trailing behind like a little duckling, "..Young Master?"

Jingyi nodded, "Nice to see you again coldface- Ah! I mean, Daozhang!"

A-Qing put her hands on her hips, "So can we get Daozhang back or not?"

Jingyi stared at her face intently, "..Miss, are you.. Are you blind?"

A-Qing glared, "No! My eyes are just like this, okay?! Now answer my question!"

"Jeez." Jingyi muttered under his breath, "It's like having another Jin Ling." A glare. "Okay, okay! I'll try!"

As Jingyi fiddled with the platform, A-Qing turned to Song Lan, "Daozhang, you know what happened to him before he died.. Do you think he'll be okay?"

Song Lan frowned, "I...I am not sure."

A-Qing pursed her lips, "Okay. Great. That's helpful." She turned to Jingyi, "Ay, shortstuff! Are you done yet?!"

Jingyi raised *both* eyebrows, "Shortstuff?! Miss, you're short even for a girl! And may I add, very proudly, that I am taller than Jin Ling!"

"Who's Jin Ling? Never heard of him."

"Of course you haven't!"

"Is it done?"

Jingyi slowly blinked, "Uh.. Yeah."

A-Qing stepped forward, "So, like, are you gonna tell me how to do this or should I figure it out myself?"

Jingyi shrugged, "I dunno. Just touch whatever you see. There's writing on it that tells you what's what."

The screen showed four different options. **[Character one]** [Character two] [Character three] **[Character four]**

A-Qing frowned, "What? Why are those two not shiny?"

Jingyi spoke, "We've already selected those two. You were the third option, and coldface was the second."

"Oh," Without a second thought, she selected **[Character one]**

A second later, her haughty attitude lasted no more, for she was already in tears upon seeing the familiar white figure.

"Daozhang!" She cried, immediately leaping into a hug.

Xiao Xingchen froze, "I- What? A-Qing?"

Song Lan stepped forward, "Xingchen.."

"Zichen..." Xiao Xingchen stuttered, "I.. Y-You..."

Song Lan let a smile grace his features, "Xingchen, you're really here."

Despite having a severe case of mysophobia, Song Lan hauled A-Qing and Xiao Xingchen into a hug, "You're both alive."

A-Qing hiccuped, "Daozhang, I missed you!"

Xiao Xingchen was too busy sending question marks to Song Lan that he didn't notice A-Qing's snot being wiped onto his *white* sleeve, "Zichen, what happened? ..Why am I here? And.. My eyesight.."

Xiao Xingchen wanted to start bawling his eyes out but refrained doing so upon noticing the many stares he and his companions were receiving. Why was he even alive? Why was there a large crowd of cultivators? Where is Xue Yang-

"Xue Yang..." He mumbled, grimacing at the way it rolled off his tongue.

A-Qing piped up, "Daozhang, he's not here! Don't worry, he's dead!"

"En." Song Lan added, which weirdly sounded like an entire sentence.

Wei Wuxian huffed a smile, "Haha, I'm good at making happy reunions. I should do this more."

"Mn." Lan Wangji agreed like the dutiful husband he is.

Jingyi snorted, "A-Niang, what do you mean? I don't recall you doing anything."

"Brat!" Wei Wuxian scolded, flicking him on the forehead.

On the screen, large text appeared. **[Episode Five (第五集)]**

The screen showed Wei Wuxian sprawled out across a bed, his robes and hair in disarray. He freely snored, interrupting the silence within the room.

"What? Wasn't Wei Wuxian just with Mini Sect Leader Jiang? Why is he sleeping?"

"Maybe it's a time skip. Didn't it say he went back to Yunmeng at the end of the last episode? He might be there now.."

"But that looks an awful lot like Mo Xuanyu's body.. Don't you see the baby face?"

"Really? I don't see the difference.."

Xiao Xingchen appeared taken aback, "Is that my Shizhi? Why is he on the.. Wall?"

A-Qing stepped forward smugly, "Well, I suppose I must tell you, Daozhang!"

"Call me Xingchen." Xiao Xingchen added with a smile.

A-Qing tried not to bounce on the spot in excitement and instead coughed into a fist, "Well.. Xingchen.. We are watching your Shizhi's memories..? Life? I don't know.. Well, all I know is that he came back to life somehow and married Hanguang-Jun."

A-Qing waited as Xiao Xingchen processed the information, "...What? Married? Didn't he.."

"He died, yes, but he's here somehow and, uh.. I'll tell you more later! Just watch!"

Xiao Xingchen slowly nodded.

One hand gripped his wrist to move his arm as Wei Wuxian was tucked in, the blanket pulled over his body. Lan Wangji exited the Jingshi, gently closing the door so as to not wake the sleeping form.

Wen Ruohan looked like he'd just given Wen Chao to the adoption center, "This is..."

Ouyang Zizhen clutched his heart, "Am I having a heart attack..? No way, no way, I'm too young!"

Not long later, when the sun was high and Clouds were few, there was a gentle knock on the door. It was followed by a voice, "Young Master Mo, have you risen yet?"

Wen Ruohan fondly smiled, "That's the young lad Sizhui's voice! So we're back in the present, eh?"

"Senior Wen, you're as smart as always!" Nie Huaisang beamed, "Not that I already figured it out ages ago, but good deduction!"

"Narcissist." Someone muttered.

Wei Wuxian blearily replied, "I can't."

Lan Sizhui startled, "Um, what is wrong, this time?"

"Such a polite young boy." A woman commented.

Wei Wuxian sat up into a sitting position and groaned from the searing pain in his backside.

Lan Wangji gently rubbed Wei Wuxian's back, as if the pain were still there. "Sorry."

Wei Wuxian spoke in annoyance, "What's wrong? I was tormented by your sect's Hanguang-Jun for the entire night!"

Multiple coughs echoed throughout the room.

Madam Yu's eyebrow twitched, "Wei Wuxian!"

Jin Zixun sneered, "Stupid cutsleeves."

Jiang Fengmian stiffly chuckled, "Aha, A-Xian... Of course he's just joking."

"Why do you say it was a joke? Lan Wangji just apologised!"

"What was that? Tormented?" Wen Ruohan raised an eyebrow, "Hmm, it seems there's some tea being spilled over here." He glanced to Li Daiyu, "Did I use that phrase right?"

Li Daiyu grinned, "Mn! Lots of tea being spilled today!"

Wei Wuxian snorted, "Calm down, people. It was because of the body spell Lan Zhan cast. No need to get your hopes up."

Jiang Cheng choked, "Who's getting their hopes up?!"

The majority of the room avoided eye contact.

The Lan disciples paled, "Tormented.." "For the entire night.."

"Aiyoh, those poor, innocent young boys. Wei Wuxian has frightened the life out of them."

Jingyi immediately stepped forward as two other disciples held him back by the arms, "Get out! If you keep spouting nonsense, we will not let you off easy!"

"Ah, maybe not frightened.. But they appear to be a bit.. Traumatized.."

Sizhui spoke, "Jingyi, calm down. We cannot go into Hanguang-Jun's living quarters without permission."

Wei Wuxian visibly smirked from behind the door, "I won't go out! I'm too afraid to face anyone!"

"Wei Wuxian, can you be a decent person for once in your life?! Is that so hard?!" Jiang Cheng hysterically yelled.

Wei Ying giggled, "Aiyoh, my didi is so cute." He fluttered his eyelashes innocently, "Do you want gege to give you a hug?"

"Who's your didi?!"

Jingyi snapped, "Take away that donkey of yours and train it properly! It makes so much noise!"

Wei Wuxian reluctantly got dressed and slammed the door open, "What did you do to my Lil' Apple? Don't touch it, It's quite good at kicking!"

Jingyi rolled his eyes, "No shit. I got hauled across Cloud Recess just for trying to bathe it."

"Cursing is forbidden." A familiar voice berated.

The screen switched to Lil' Apple tied to a tree stump as he was surrounded by a horde of rabbits.

"That looks seriously cute!"

"Adorable!"

Wei WuXian's eyes lit up at the sight, "There are so many rabbits!"

He began to roll up his sleeves, "Come, come, let's put them on a stick and start roasting!"

Meanwhile, the Lan disciples were muttering amongst one another.

"Why is Young Master Wei so obsessed with roasting rabbits?"

"Maybe he does it to annoy Hanguang-Jun?"

"But why would he want to do that? Hanguang-Jun loves those rabbits."

"I dunno. It might be something couples do."

"That makes sense. We wouldn't know anyways because none of us have had any wives."

A senior Lan disciple leaned closer, "Ha, I kissed a girl once. She used tongue and everything."

"What?!"

"When did this happen?!"

"Why don't I know about it?!"

"You're so lucky!"

The Senior raised his head in triumph, "It was before I joined the GusuLan Sect. My dog was such an adorable little thing. She would smother me in kisses all the time!"

"...."

All of the disciples dispersed, their interest long forgotten.

The Senior Lan frowned, "Huh? Why did they all leave?"

Jingyi was once again being held back by the arms by two Lan disciples, "KILLING IS FORBIDDEN IN CLOUD RECESS! MAKE YOUR DONKEY SHUT UP RIGHT NOW!"

"This kid has some serious anger issues."

Lan Qiren frowned, "Shouting is forbidden."

Many muffled their scoffs. How many times had he shouted at Wei Wuxian when he was a guest disciple?

"Hypocrite.." Someone mumbled.

"This little Lan is quite amusing though. I'd have fun teasing him every day."

"My goodness, that's so random, yet so cute at the same time. '*Make your donkey shut up right now*', oh, how I wish this boy was my son."

"You can't steal the Yiling Laozu's child!"

"But didn't the Yiling Laozu steal children long ago?"

The Jin earned himself many looks.

Ouyang Zizhen rolled his eyes, "Come on bro, we're past that. It's kind of obvious Senior Wei didn't do that. Did you even see how he looked at Hanguang-Jun? Why would he bother stealing children when he has Hanguang-Jun to make their own-"

Sect Leader Ouyang looked like someone just strangled him. "That is QUITE enough. Not another word out of you. You're like twelve, why do you say things like this?!"

"A-Die, I'm not twelve.."

"Have some patience, won't you?" Wei WuXian scolded "Lil' Apple is only braying because he's hungry."

He gently placed an apple in the donkey's mouth while stroking it's head, "He'll be better after you feed him."

"So.. In other words, it's a glutton."

"One with a ravenous appetite, at that."

Wei Wuxian continued to stroke Lil' Apple with a smile, "You see? Better now, isn't he?"

"Since when did Wei Wuxian reign in that donkey's temper? Just a few episodes ago, it was flinging him off of its back."

"Oh, do you remember that time it chewed at Wei Wuxian's hair when he was taking a nap?"

"I do, It was quite cute."

Wei Wuxian paused, "Can I really not roast these rabbits? Would I be chased off the mountain if I do?"

Jingyi sternly held out his arms in a protective stance in front of the rabbits, "These are Hanguang-Jun's! We just help him look after them sometimes. You cannot dare roast them!"

The girls began to scream and squeal at the same time.

"So Sect Leader Nie was right! Lan Wangji really *did* keep the rabbits and their descendants!"

"If my love for my husband could be called a pond, Wangxian's love for each other is like a sea!"

"..That's deep.."

"Uh, mind my asking, do you even love your husband? Shouldn't you be saying things like 'if *their* love is a pond, *my* love is a sea'?"

Wei Wuxian blinked, "What? These are his?"

Internally, he giggled, 'What a person Lan Zhan is! In the past, he refused to accept them even when I tried giving them to him for free, but now he's secretly raised an entire nest of them! And he was saying he didn't want them?'

Nie Huaisang narrowed his eyes, "I sense tsundere behaviour."

Li Diayu stroked her chin in thought, "Hm, that is awfully suspicious. Don't you agree, Brother Huaisang?"

"Yes, yes.. Though it isn't a case of JXAAFWX, it's quite similar. While it isn't aggressive love, it's indifference. He pretends he doesn't want things but secretly wants it anyway.."

Li Diayu nodded, "We must look into this case. Until next time, Brother Nie."

"Until next time."

Barely containing his laughter, Wei WuXian asked, "Why does he have so many rabbits?"

Jingyi glared, "You are secretly laughing right now, are you not?"

Lan Jingyi frowned, "Sorry for being so disrespectful, A-Niang."

Wei Wuxian chuckled, "It's fine Jingyi. To be honest, I'm happy you tried to defend my Lan Zhan's honor."

Wei WuXian facepalmed as he imagined a stoic Lan Wangji carrying a bundle of rabbits, 'Help me! He actually loves these white, fluffy little things, doesn't he? Oh good heavens, I just can't anymore...'

"You are SO right, Wei Wuxian! Lan Wangji is such an angel."

"An angel indeed."

"Let's build a shrine for him!" The girls glanced eagerly to Wen Ruohan.

Wen Ruohan sighed, "Sorry girlies, but my pockets are empty. I have no Sect to run, which means I have no money."

"Then.. We'll all contribute! We'll build a large shrine!"

"It will be made of gold!"

Lan Daiyu added, "But isn't that like calling Lan Wangji a Jin?"

"Ew, that's so offensive. Sorry Lan Wangji."

"Maybe we should stick to silently admiring him."

Jiang Cheng snorted, "Silently?"

Suddenly, the sound of a bell resonated the entirety of Cloud Recess, startling Wei WuXian, "What's wrong? I've never heard of such violent bell strikes in Gusu before."

The Lans exchanged glances, "!!!!"

The Lan disciples watching paled.

Lan Sizhui commanded, "Quick! Go to the Mingshi!"

Wei WuXian questioned, "The Mingshi?"

Lan Sizhui spoke, "It is the Lan Sect's designated building of spirit summons. When the bell of the watchtower begins to ring on its own, it can only mean one thing--That something happened to the people performing the summoning ritual inside."

"I sense danger."

"I'm quite worried.. Will they be okay?"

The screen switched to the doors of the Mingshi, where a group of Lan disciples were crowding.

"What is wrong?"

"What happened?"

"There have almost been zero cases in which the summoning failed.."

Wei WuXian questioned, "Why isn't anyone going in?"

Lan Sizhui replied, "The doors to the Mingshi can only be opened from the inside. Not only is it difficult to open them from the outside by force, it is forbidden to do so as well."

"So if people are dying in there, you won't try to save them because it's against the rules?"
The Jiang scoffed, "Who am I kidding? You Lans do hold your 'Wall Of Discipline' above all else."

"Someone came out!" The doors of the Mingshi creaked open as a Lan disciple came rushing out, injured and bloody, and unceremoniously crashed to the floor.

Many visibly grimaced at the sight.

"That dude is as good as dead."

"As good as dead indeed."

"How on earth did he get injured to that extent?!"

Two disciples held the injured Lan up, "What happened?!"

Jin Ling spoke, "Uh, hello? Use your eyes. He was attacked."

Jingyi rolled his eyes, "Little mistress, he was asking about what happened to make him *get* so injured. It's pretty obvious that he was attacked. What, did seeing Sect Leader Jiang act like a little brat make you lose your sense of reason?"

Jin Ling turned away with a huff.

The injured disciple clenched their eyes shut as they faintly murmured, "We should have not have.. We should not have summoned it.."

"Uh, this is quite disturbing.."

"What happened to the fluffy moments?"

"Nevermind that, is this kid okay?!"

Wei WuXian yanked them by the arm, "What creature's soul are you trying to summon?! Who else is inside? Where is Hanguang-Jun?!"

Wei WuXian hissed, "Ah, that was quite rough.. I was too worked up.."

"...But it's cute he's worried about Hanguang-Jun!" Someone mumbled.

"Yeah!" The girls agreed.

"Yeah!" Wen Ruohan yelled.

Jiang Cheng stared incredulously. Why was he yelling?!

The Lan disciple heaved, "Hanguang-Jun told me to run away-" They began to viciously leak blood from the seven apertures of their head. The disciple's eyes grew wide as they toppled over onto the floor.

"Oh no! Quick, help him!"

"He is bleeding from his Qiqiao! What is happening inside?!"

"Young Master Mo, Wait-" Ignoring Sizhui's call, Wei WuXian rushed to the Mingshi's doors.

"OPEN!" He kicked the doors and they immediately slammed open.

Wen Ruohan whistled.

Sizhui stared, mouth agape, 'He shouted open the doors to the Mingshi?!"

Li Daiyu crossed her arms in triumph, "Of course he did. My guy Wei Wuxian is protagonist material." A flash of inspiration crossed her features.

Wen Ruohan raised an eyebrow in interest.

Wei WuXian rushed inside, not forgetting to shut the doors behind him.

The Lan disciples began to helplessly bang onto the doors with the hope of entering.

"What happened? How did the doors open?!"

"Open! Open! Why aren't they opening?!"

"If I didn't know any better, I would've thought they were a group of Jiangs."

"Such brutes. Lan Wangji raised a unique bunch, indeed."

Sizhui gently cradled the injured Lan disciple in his arms, "Help me first! He is bleeding from his Qiqiao!"

"At least someone is being reasonable. They all forgot about poor Cannon Fodder #16!" Li Daiyu huffed.

A certain Lan disciple's eyebrow twitched, "Cannon Fodder #16?"

The screen switched to the inside of the Mingshi, where Wei WuXian idly stood within the darkness.

'Just what in the world is this?' As he walked further, Wei WuXian began to notice the dark energy resonating within the air.

"Resentful energy." Someone commented.

"Wei Wuxian should have no trouble with this, then."

Lan WangJi was finally revealed to be playing the guqin, a mess of bloodied bodies surrounding.

Ouyang Zizhen raised an eyebrow, "Are you sure this isn't horror-themed?"

Wei WuXian startled at seeing the unconscious figure of Lan Qiren, 'Even Lan Qiren..'

He glanced to his left, only to witness a hand encased in dark energy, '!! It's the arm we took back from Mo village!'

"Oh I see! So Lan Wangji was trying to do something with the arm!"

"You-" Lan Wangji stopped playing the guqin rather abruptly, and Wei WuXian took silent triumph at seeing the bewildered expression maring his face. It would have been an amusing sight, if not for the blood sliding down his chin.

Lan Xichen startled, "Wangji!"

Wei WuXian stepped into the array. He placed a flute to his lips and blew.

A haunting melody resounded within the Mingshi's walls. His eyes flashed red. *'I have to suppress the arm first.'*

"Holy shit."

"Is it just me or it's getting hot in here?"

"I ship Wangxian yet at the same time pine for them individually. What is this? I'm so confused."

Hearing the girls' comments, Lan Wangji held Wei Wuxian's waist tighter, "Mine."

Li Daiyu whistled, "Damn, Wei Wuxian be looking fine."

Wen Ruohan smirked, "Of course. As expected of my son."

In the corner, Jiang Fengmian was grumbling incoherently, 'Stupid Wen bastard thinking he can steal my son. Just you wait.'

Hearing the music, Lan Wangji snapped out of his trance and focused back onto Wangji. *'The song being played is Evocation.'*

Their music joined together in complete harmony. *'It uses a corpse, part of a corpse, or an object that the corpse loved when it was still alive as a medium for the soul to follow the melody.'*

"A very helpful explanation." Someone commented, "But, just wondering, why do you always explain things to yourself in your head? It's helpful but quite, uh, what's the word?"

"Weird?" Jin Ling finished.

Wei Wuxian shrugged, "Dunno. It helps to give me a better grasp of the situation. Glad to hear my thoughts are useful."

"Yes, it's very helpful! Thank you, Senior Wei!" They replied, clearly not noticing the sarcasm in Wei Wuxian's tone.

During their song, Lan Qiren stirred.

He blearily blinked open his eyes, only to have a wretched tune edged into his ears. (Wei Wuxian was using a hand-crafted bamboo flute; of course it sounded unpleasant.)

"S-Stop the flute!" He stammered, only to fall unconscious once more.

The crowd burst into fits of laughter.

"Lan Qiren never changes, does he?"

"He actually became conscious because he didn't like the song." The Junior couldn't stifle the chuckles that escaped.

Wen Ruohan sighed, "Lan Qiren, Lan Qiren. You're always so dramatic. Sometimes I wonder who is the elder one."

Lan Qiren stared in incredulously, "You!"

The resentful energy surrounding the hand acted as a barrier, blocking off any attempts at soul summoning, 'It doesn't work?!"

"What?!"

"Why didn't it work?!"

"Even the Yiling Patriarch and Hanguang-Jun combined failed to succeed?!"

"Impossible!"

Wei WuXian and Lan WangJi paused, their song temporarily paused, 'It's impossible that the soul can't be summoned with Lan Wangji and I playing Evocation together.'

'Unless.. Unless that person's soul has been cut apart along with the corpse!!'

In the corner, Jin Guangyao Meng Yao made an audible gulp.

"Hey, so like, can you guys spoil it for me? Whose arm is it?"

Jingyi crossed his arms, "Find out yourself."

Lan Wangji exhaled a deep breath and began to play again; a different song as a way to suppress the spirit residing inside the arm. Wei WuXian soon joined him.

"Okay, let me just comment on how beautiful this music sounds."

"Right, right! The people in Cloud Recess are so lucky! They probably get to hear this every day!"

Ouyang Zizhen smirked, "We do. Senior Wei and Hanguang-Jun play it for us whenever we want."

Jin Ling rolled his eyes, internally screaming at the habit, "You idiot, you're not even a Lan. Why do you sound so smug?"

Jingyi snickered, "Idiots. But that's true, they play it for us when we want. Now, be jealous! Ahahahaha!"

Sizhui released a badly-contained chuckle.

The arm was soon sent clattering into the ground with a loud thump, its finger still stretched out.

Wei WuXian lowered his flute, "Suppressing is still only temporary."

Lan Wangji nodded, "Trace its source."

Wei WuXian narrowed his eyes, "If we trace its source, find the full corpse belonging to the hand, and understand who they really are, then there'd naturally be a way to save them."

Sect Leader Yao spat, "Save them? It's obviously Wei Wuxian's ploy!"

He received many unimpressed stares.

"Dude, can you like, shut up?"

"Yeah, you're pretty annoying. Be quiet."

Lan Wangji glanced to the hand which was lying idly on the array, "The Northwest."

Li Daiyu raised an eyebrow, "So the demonic hand is helping them? That's kinda neat."

Following the left hand's direction, they went to the Northwest. As soon as they approached Qinghe, the posture that the arm maintained suddenly changed. The next

clue might just lie in Qinghe.

Nie Huaisang choked on air.

Nie Mingjue raised an eyebrow.

As they traversed the bustling streets, a stall owner's call perked Wei WuXian's interest, "Rouge and powder, high quality and cheap!"

Seeing Wei WuXian stopped by, the stall owner smiled, "Young Master, would you like to have a look?"

"I can already see what's going to happen."

When Wei WuXian peered closer in interest, they continued, "Young Master, are these for your wife at home?"

Wei WuXian grinned, "They're for myself!"

"I'm beginning to think Wei Wuxian is enjoying acting like a lunatic."

"That doesn't sound far off.."

"Though, he might *actually* be interested in rogue."

"I wouldn't trust him to use it on himself. Maybe Lan Wangji could do it for him."

Many nodded in agreement after recalling what had happened when he last had access to rogue.

Jin Zixun sneered, "Stupid cutsleeves." (It seemed to be his catchphrase now.)

The stall owner tilted his head in confusion.

"Pff, this guy is so open with his emotions."

Sensing that Wei WuXian was just teasing, Lan Wangji sighed. "Do not bother others if you are not going to buy it."

"Lan Wangji, ah, Lan Wangji." Wen Ruohan shook his head, "Don't lie, I bet you had a few fantasies of Wei Wuxian as your wife, saying 'Welcome home, dear!'"

Li Daiyu's eyes shone with motivation. She grabbed out a piece of paper and began to scribble on it.

Wei Wuxian abruptly spun around, "I really do want to buy some!"

Lan Wangji asked, "Do you have money?"

Wei WuXian remained silent, "..."

"Wow, he really doesn't, now that I think about it."

"But don't worry, Lan Wangji is there! He can pay for everything!"

Wei Wuxian beamed, "Lan Zhan is rich! He can buy anything!"

Lan Wangji nodded, "Will pay for Wei Ying."

Lan Sizhui teased, "Poor-Gege." He somewhat recalled calling Wei Wuxian by that name in the burial mounds.

Wei Wuxian wiped non-existent tears, "My son, how could you?"

Softening at the sight of his husband's tears, Lan Wangji huffed a smile, "Wei Ying, don't tease."

Wei Wuxian giggled, "Lan Zhan, Lan Zhan! Don't smile like that, my poor heart can't take it!" He pulled his husband into a kiss.

Meanwhile, a certain Jin sneered, "Damn cutsleeves."

Chapter End Notes

"Damn Cutsleeves." -Jin Zixun

"Wen Ruohan looked like he'd just given Wen Chao to the adoption center"
I feel so lame for laughing at my own joke lmao

If you weren't sure, 'Shizhi' means Martial Nephew

Next Chapter: Jin Ling is back! (With fairy)

Prelude II - The Present

Chapter Summary

Jin Ling and fairy make an appearance!

Chapter Notes

Guys, we have a Spanish translation now! Hooray! Let's give a round of applause to BlackKuroi! (≧▽≦)

Thank you all for your comments, they are what fuel me to write! o(^▽^)o

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Suddenly, Wei WuXian rushed towards Lan Wangji and smoothly jumped onto his back, clinging to him like a koala. With his head resting on the other's shoulder, Wei WuXian groped the Lan all over the chest, smoothly sliding his hands inside of heaps of robes.

Wen Ruohan chuckled, "Son, that is quite bold of you."

Lan Qiren pointed a shaky finger at the screen, "You.... You.... SHAMELESS!"

(As much as he wanted to Qi Deviate, he was unable to do so due to Wen Qing.)

At the same time, the girls began to hysterically scream.

"OH MY GOODNESS!"

"The intimacy cannot be overlooked!"

"Beautiful! This is everything I have dreamed of seeing! I can finally die happy!"

"He's touching Lan Wangji, he's touching Lan Wangji, he's touching Lan Wangji, he's touching Lan Wangji, he's touching Lan Wangji!!!"

"Are you all right, sister? Do you need some therapy?"

"..Oh," Out of embarrassment, Jin Ling looked away, muttering a small "Shameless.."

Ouyang Zizhen's eyebrows furrowed in confusion, "What? I understand Lan Qiren, the poor man, but surely you have seen *even worse* from those two. Why are you so embarrassed?"

Lan Jingyi leaned in close to Ouyang Zizhen, covering the side of his mouth with a hand as if it would make their conversation unheard even though they were in a room filled with cultivators, "He's such a pure white lotus. Even the smallest things embarrass him. Hence the 'little mistress'. His purity and temper fit that title so well, right?"

Ouyang Zizhen 'oh'ed, "I see, I see. How informative. Thank you, Jingyi."

Jin Ling turned red in anger (definitely not embarrassment), "Shut up! Who's the white lotus?! You're a white lotus, your whole family's a white lotus!"

Wen Ruohan stared at Wei Wuxian and Lan Wangji, who were shamelessly clinging to one another, "Little man, are you sure about that?"

Lan Jingyi nodded, "Yeah, A-Niang and A-Die aren't so pure--"

He was silenced by a yell, "SHUT UP!"

'He really does have money on him!' When Wei Ying's fingers caught a red string, he pulled out an embroidered pink pouch. 'Wow, this doesn't seem like something he'd carry on him at all! And the pouch looks kind of familiar?'

Luo Qingyang paused, "That.. Is that?!"

Wei Wuxian spun around, "Ah, Mianmian! I didn't know you were here!" He glanced to Luo Qingyang's daughter, "And little Mianmian! Though, you're not so little anymore. Do you remember me?" He pointed a finger to himself with a wide grin.

Mianmian ran behind her mother.

Luo Qingyang chuckled, "She's still so shy at this age. Wei-gongzi, it has been a while."

Wei Wuxian nodded, "It really has."

They both continued to chatter, completely forgetting about the pouch.

Wei WuXian eventually bought a few tubs of rouge and paid the Stall Owner using Lan Wangji's money , "I'll have these, here's the money."

"Lan Wangji is such a doting husband."

"Couldn't agree more."

"+1"

"+1"

"+1"

"+1"

Wei Wuxian examined the pouch curiously, not noticing as Lan Wangji walked away, 'Oh well, it's not the first strange thing about Lan Wangji, is it? I'm already getting used to it.'

"Strange? It's called the aftermath of pining for someone for thirteen years and finally meeting them once again only to find they're a dense idiot who can't realize your feelings even when you're being so obvious!" Li Daiyu heaved, startling Nie Huaisang.

He blinked, "Uh, bro, you okay?"

Li Daiyu glared, "I thought we clarified earlier that I am not a man. Just because I think some girls can be idiots doesn't mean I'm a dude!"

Nie Huaisang spoke, "..Bro is a friendly term.. We're friends, which makes you my bro."

Lan Wangji began a brisk walk, incurring a whine from Wei Wuxian, "Ai- Wait for me!"

The stall owner smiled as he held out three sheets of paper, "Thank you for your purchase, Young Master. Here are three free copies of the Yiling Patriarch's portrait."

".I have an inkling of where this is going.."

Wei Wuxian paused, "Who?"

The stall owner spoke, "The Yiling Patriarch's evil-suppressing portraits--one for the door, one for the hall, and stick the last one on your bedroom wall."

"Shouldn't you be putting portraits of Gods on the wall? Why would let a so-called demonic spirit sit around in your room as you sleep?"

Instead of paintings of Wei Wuxian in his old days, it was a shrimpy creature with a chubby face and bony arms standing in a weird pose (that would probably break your spine if attempted), as well as two large red swirls on each cheek. "With the strong surge of evil energy, it uses poison to counter poison, making sure that no dark creature will ever come near you!"

"Oh, I suppose that answers my question."

"It sounds like an excuse to make money.."

"For some reason, even I feel highly offended right now."

"What is that creature?"

"A demon?"

"I've seen 'portraits' like those before but upon seeing what Wei Wuxian truly looked like, it's honestly ridiculous now."

Wei Wuxian pouted, pointing a finger at the screen, "Lan Zhan, Lan Zhan! He's bullying me! I'm not that ugly!"

Lan Wangji glared at the screen, "Mn. Wei Ying is not ugly."

Wei Wuxian stared blankly, "What?"

"Imagine how confused he must be. He resurrected after thirteen years, only to find his appearance altered to the point that it is unrecognizable."

He clenched the paper so tight that it began to scrunch up at the sides, "Wei Wuxian was a man famous for his good looks! Just what is this that you've drawn?! If you haven't seen the actual person, then don't draw anything. You're gonna mislead the younger generation."

"Yeah!"

"You tell him, Wei Wuxian!"

"He's misleading the younger generation!"

The stall owner simply waved his hand, ignorant to the way Wei Wuxian's anger grew, "What are you doing? Pff, you sound as if you've seen Wei Wuxian himself."

"But he *is* Wei Wuxian! Just shut your stinking trap and listen to him for heaven's sake!"

Jingyi raised an eyebrow, "How would that benefit the heavens?"

"You know what- I give up."

Suddenly, a burst of power struck between them, sending the stall owner flying into a wooden crate, "How dare you mention Wei Wuxian in front of me!"

Jin Ling tried not to cringe.

Wei Wuxian turned his head, only to come face to face with Jin Ling, "Don't blame me for the lack of mercy, then."

Jin Ling deeply cringed.

Wei Ying facepalmed, 'He's got a bad temper and is hostile towards everyone. Proud, headstrong, condescending--he's learned all of his father and uncle's bad traits, yet none of his mother's good ones.'

Jin Ling looked massively offended, "Hah? Excuse me?!"

Jiang Cheng's left eyebrow twitched.

Jin Zixuan made the same face, "Bad traits? I understand about my wife but why did you say I don't have a single good one?!"

Wei Wuxian held out a palm, ready to count, "Okay, so first, you're a peacock. Second, you're a peacock. Third, you hurt my Shijie--"

"Okay fine, I did hurt her but at least I've changed--"

"Third, you're an annoying peacock."

"I am NOT annoying!"

"Fifth, you remind me of that blob of yellow--"

"You mean Jin Zixun?!"

A Jin in the background, "WHAT?!"

Wei Wuxian continued, "Sixth, you're rich--"

"You mean you just don't like being poor? ..But don't you have Lan Wangji's money?"

"Ah, you're right. Nevermind that. Seven, you're--"

"Shut up!" Jiang Cheng screeched, "Knowing you, that list is going to be endless." A pause.
"Here, let me try. First, he's annoying--"

"CAN YOU BE QUIET?!" Someone yelled, "WE'RE TRYING TO WATCH SOMETHING YOU STUPID PEACOCKS!"

Wei Wuxian and Jiang Wanyin looked extremely offended, "Excuse me?!"

Jiang Yanli giggled behind a sleeve.

'If I don't do some tinkering with him, he'll end up suffering great losses in the future.'

Jiang Cheng's eyebrow twitched, "Tinkering?"

Jin Ling huffed, "I'm not some little doll!"

Jingyi spoke, "You aren't?"

"SHUT UP!"

"Why is this little kid telling everyone to shut up..?" Someone squeaked.

Jin Ling sneered, "You haven't run away yet? Fine, then."

Wei Wuxian remained silent, "..."

After a moment, he shrugged his shoulders, "Huh, I wonder who was the one forced down onto the ground and was unable to get up?"

"Ooooh." The crowd hummed, with a few occasional whistles and shouts of "Damn!"

Jin Ling put two fingers to his lips and whistled.

A loud bark echoed in the distance, startling Wei Wuxian.

Wei Ying paused.

Jiang Yanli's eyes widened.

Jiang Cheng fiddled with his fingers.

Wei Wuxian spun around, only to see a growling dog glaring daggers at him.

Wei Wuxian immediately covered his ears, burrowing into his husband's warmth, "L-Lan Zhan... Lan Zhan, Lan Zhan, Lan Zhan."

"I'm here, Wei Ying." Lan Wangji assured, rubbing small circles into his husband's back.

As everybody was too busy watching the screen in confusion, nobody noticed the scene taking place near them.

As it pounced, he felt millions of alarm bells ringing inside of his head. "!!!"

The Jiangs glanced to Wei Wuxian, who, as expected, was having a nervous breakdown.

"A-Xian.."

"Wei Wuxian.."

Seeing a familiar white figure in the distance, Wei Wuxian yelled, "LAN ZHAN, SAVE ME!!!"

Jin Ling bowed his head in shame.

There were many confused murmurs within the crowd.

"What?"

"Save him from what? I don't see no ghost."

"Perhaps he sensed something?"

"Yes, that's possible."

He ran behind Lan Wangji, shivering as he clutched onto the white sleeve.

"What would be so powerful as to rattle the Yiling Patriarch this much?!"

"It must be a spirit with extremely high levels of resentful energy! Even more so than the infamous Burial Mounds!"

The dog stopped in front of them, still hysterically barking.

"Ah, look at that lovely dog."

"So pretty."

"So.. Coincidental?"

"Right.. It's almost as if.. He's afraid of it?"

"No, there's no way.."

Seeing Lan Wangji with Wei Wuxian, Jin Ling paused, '*Why is the lunatic with him again? Oh no, I'll be scolded again!*'

"..." Not a moment later, a nauseous expression marred Jin Ling's face as he stared at the scene in front of him.

"..." The audience shared the same expression

"Don't come over!" Wei Wuxian was hugging Lan Wangji's waist, tucking his head into the safety (read: chest) of his companion.

"Aha... haha... Perhaps the resentful spirit possessed the dog?" (The person who spoke seemed to not believe themself.)

"Right, right.. That's very possible."

Lan Wangji didn't make any move to push Wei Wuxian off as he was stunned to the spot (with a very noticeable flush to his cheeks).

"Um.. Hanguang-Jun.. Shouldn't you be fighting the resentful spirit?"

"Right, right.. It could be dangerous if it gets too close to the little Jin boy.."

"This is no time for blushing.."

Sensing the distraction, Jin Ling narrowed his eyes, '*There's a chance!*'

"LET'S GO!" He soon ran far into the distance with his faithful dog trailing behind.

Wei Wuxian sniffled, "Lan Zhan, is it gone?"

"Mn." Lan Wangji pulled his husband closer.

Finally unfixing himself from the hold, Wei Wuxian exhaled a sigh in relief, "Phew.."

"The resentful spirit is gone which means he doesn't sense it anymore!"

"Perhaps the resentful spirit was the owner of the arm?!"

"What an amazing deduction!"

Jiang Cheng snorted, "Idiots."

Wei Wuxian's shoulder was abruptly grabbed by the stall owner (who was somehow still spotless after being flung into a wooden crate) "Brother! Thank you so much for what happened! Take these as a gift of my gratitude. If you cut the price and sell one for three coins, you'd still end up earning at least three hundred."

Madam Jin raised an eyebrow, "You'd earn more selling pigs' guts."

"She's spitting facts right there." Li Daiyu tutted.

Wei Wuxian huffed in annoyance, pointing an accusing finger at the paper, "You think these are a gift of your gratitude?! If you really are grateful, then draw him in a prettier way!"

Lan Wangji nodded, "Mn."

He paused, suddenly remembering the real reason they were there, "Right, when doing your business here, have you heard of any strange incidents? Or seen any odd things?"

"I honestly forgot why they were there in the first place."

"That's right, the body hunt!"

The stall owner beamed, pointing a finger to himself in triumph, "Strange incidents? You asked just the right person! I stay here most of the year. They call me Qinghe's Mr-Know-It-All."

"They call you? Or did you mean *you call yourself?*"

The man asked, "What sort of strange incidents are you looking for?"

Wei Wuxian spoke, "For example, the hauntings of evil spirits, cases of dismembered corpses, tragedies of annihilated sects."

"You can't casually ask about dismembered corpses, you know."

The stall owner stroked his chin in thought, "There aren't any here, but if you go a bit less than two miles ahead, there's a mountain ridge name Xinglu Ridge, also known as the 'Man-eating ridge'. Inside, there's a 'man-eating castle' inhabited by man-eating monsters."

"What's with all the man-eating?"

He pulled his face into an evil smirk, "They'd devour anyone who ventures inside, leaving behind not even a single crumb. No corpses could be found--There wasn't a single exception!"

"It's honestly funny watching this guy try to scare the Yiling Patriarch himself. If he knew of Wei Wuxian's identity, he'd be running away with his tail between his legs."

Jingyi tilted his head in confusion, "Tail? I don't see no tail--"

"How stupid can you get?!" Jin Ling whacked him on the head, "It's a phrase, you stupid idiot! So just shut up, no one wants to hear your stupid questions. Stop being stupid and use your brain for once!"

Ouyang Zizhen spoke, "Hey, what's with the overuse of 'stupid'--"

Jin Ling scowled, "Shut up!"

"You also keep saying shut up to everyone--"

"Shut up!"

"-and for some reason, I feel like I should state a complaint--"

"Shut up!"

"I was just saying--"

"Shut up!"

"I..." Ouyang Zizhen hung his head in defeat.

Jin Zixuan stared at his son with a complicated expression.

"A-Ling, that is rude. Apologize." Jiang Yanli scolded.

Jin Ling pouted, "...Sorry."

Jingyi smirked, "What was that, little mistress?"

"Sorry."

"I can't hear you. Can you speak louder-"

"I SAID I'M SORRY, NOW SHUT UP!"

Wei Wuxian stared blankly, "But if not even a single crumb was left behind and no corpses could be found either, how could it be known that they were eaten?"

The man avoided eye contact, awkwardly scratching his cheek, "S-Someone saw it, of course.."

Madam Jin raised an eyebrow, "Qinghe's Mr-Know-It-All, eh?"

Lan Qiren nodded as he stroked his beard, "Yes, that is what he said."

Madam Jin gave him a look that said 'I wasn't asking you'.

Wei Wuxian's eyebrow twitched, "How many people were eaten at Xinglu Ridge? When were they eaten? What were their ages? Their genders? Their names? Where did they live?"

The stall owner held up his hands in defense, "..This is just how the story goes. How should I know?"

Wei Wuxian spoke, "Didn't you say that anyone who ventures inside would be devoured without a single crumb being left behind, without any exceptions? Who first told the story, then?"

The man shook his head, "No idea.."

Wei Wuxian scoffed, "Qinghe's Mr-Know-It-All?"

"Exactly right," Madam Yu spoke, "Such an incompetent man. If he gives himself such a title, he should know to live up to it."

Many nodded in agreement.

The man laughed, an awkward sound within the deafening silence. He abruptly turned around in a huff of anger, "The stories never talked about that anyway!"

Wei Wuxian grabbed his shoulder, "No, no, no. Don't go yet!"

A hint of jealousy swirled within Lan Wangji's eyes.

Wei Wuxian felt fingers digging into his waist, "Huh? Lan Zhan, what's wrong?"

"Let me ask you something else. Xinglu Ridge is still a part of the Qinghe Region, isn't it? Isn't Qinghe the Nie Sect's area? If there really are monsters roaming around Xinglu Ridge, why would the Nie Sect ignore them?"

The man raised an eyebrow, "The Nie Sect? If it were the Nie Sect from back then, of course they wouldn't be ignored. Before the stories even lasted a second day, the Nie Sect would've raided where the monsters roamed at once, in the most resolute way possible. But the current Sect Leader of the Nie Sect haha, is the 'I don't know', isn't it?"

Nie Mingjue paused, "Hm..?"

Wei Wuxian keened closer in interest, "I don't know?"

Nie Huaisang earned himself many looks, "...What? What do you all want?"

Li Daiyu stifled a chuckle.

"The previous leader of the Qinghe Nie Sect was Chifeng-Zun, Nie Mingjue, whose way of doing things was direct and forceful. After he encountered a qi deviation, and died in front of the public eye, his younger brother, Nie Huaisang, took the position of Sect Leader."

Nie Mingjue slightly smiled, "Huaisang, I always knew that if you tried, you would be able to-"

The stall owner chuckled, "No matter what questions are asked of Sect Leader Nie, if he doesn't know it, he wouldn't say anything, if he does know it, he'd be too scared to say anything. If you rush him or try to force an answer out of him, he'd shake his head again and again, crying 'I don't know, I don't know, I really don't know!'"

Nie Mingjue's eyebrow twitched, "HUAISANG!"

Nie Huaisang muttered a small, "...Ai, sorry, sorry."

He knew his little brother better than anyone. Meaning, he also knew the little brat was a smart man, just like their father. Huaisang always complained about his studies and

swordsmanship and Nie Mingjue knew it wasn't feigned dislike.

He had partially hoped that his little brother would push past his fears, but this...

Wei Wuxian pursed his lips, 'Nie Huaisang.'

Everyone turned to the mentioned person.

Nie Huaisang squeaked, immediately hiding behind Wen Ruohan, "I... I don't know! I really don't know!! Don't ask me about anything!!!!"

Wen Ruohan raised an eyebrow, turning his head slightly, "Nie Huaisang.. Nobody asked.."

He pressed a hand to his chin in thought, 'Nie Huaisang was my classmate back then. He wasn't an unkind person. It wasn't that he wasn't clever, but that his heart was set somewhere else and he used his smarts elsewhere.'

Touched, Nie Huaisang's eyes watered, "Wei-Xiong.."

There was the resounding bark of a dog in the distance.

Wei Wuxian flinched

"A dog!" Wei Wuxian felt his hair stand on end, so he immediately ran behind Lan Wangji for protection.

The girls, who were clearly smart enough to notice that it was, in fact, a phobia, cooed.

"Ah, even though I'm weaker than my seven-year-old sister, I wish to protect him!"

"He already recognizes Lan Wangji as his protector."

"That's adorable!"

"Hide behind Lan Wangji! He'll protect you from that beast!"

Lan Wangji spoke, "...It is still far away, what are you hiding for?"

Wei Wuxian squeezed the arms that were locked around his waist, "I-I-I-I-I-I'm still gonna hide first. Where is it?! Where is it?!"

"I feel awfully terrible for finding his stuttering cute.."

Wen Qing snorted. It reminded her of a certain fierce corpse.

The majority of the room inhaled a deep breath. As much as they wanted to deny it, there was no excuse for the stuttering.

"So...."

"Uh..."

"The Yiling Patriarch Wei Wuxian, who wielded unobtainable power and had the ability to move hills and mountains, who was envied yet feared by many, and possessed haughty arrogance so haughty that he had to be ostracized by the entire cultivation world--Is afraid of dogs."

"A man once head disciple of the Yunmeng Jiang sect, ranking fourth among Young Masters of the generation, and who was rumored to steal kids from their beds to cook his delicacy aka. children soup--Is afraid of a freaking dog."

"A dog. A dog. "

"Um, bestie, are you alright there?"

"What is happening?"

"My world views have been changed."

"If someone told me the Earth was flat, I'd honestly believe them at this point."

"Wait, so the Earth actually *IS* flat?!"

"Shut up Jingyi, your comments aren't needed."

"Come to think of it, couldn't we have just surrounded the Burial Mounds with dogs all those years ago..?"

"To think that we would have been able to apprehend him so easily.."

"Not even my two-year-old child is afraid of dogs.. Just what in the heavens?"

"Hold on buster, we have already clarified that Wei Wuxian acts like a three-year-old."

A voice in the distance added, "-XianXian is three!"

"-See? It's not that surprising if you ask me."

"That's because you and your little group are fussing over two cutsleeves and thinking they're cute."

"For your information, they *are* cute, so slam your crusty lips together because your breath reeks as bad as my dad's number twos."

"Ew, they must stink- WAIT WHAT?! MY BREATH STINKS?!"

Li Daiyu internally noted to interrogate the Jiangs (read: to find out why Wei WuXian has such a fear) after the viewing was over.

Jiang Fengmian didn't restrain the smirk aimed towards Wen Ruohan--The old man was picking his nose.. Ew did he just eat it?!

Although he felt guilty for feeling prideful, being afraid of dogs was a trait of A-Xian that only *he* knew--Shit, Wen Ruohan now knows too, doesn't he?

Yu Ziyuan simply rolled her eyes. Fengmian should just give up on the boy.

Nie Huaisang helplessly shrugged his shoulders. He had known Wei-Xiong's fear after one of his spies that were placed in Qinghe reported back that Wei-Xiong was spotted running away from a dog while hysterically screaming like a dying man.

Trust, he was just as surprised.

Lan Wangji calmly stared into the distance, "From the sound of it, it is Jin Ling's spiritual dog. Something must have happened for a spiritual dog to bark in such a way."

Jiang Yanli felt her mother instincts shoot through the roof, "A-Ling is in danger?!"

Jin Zixuan glared, "Who would dare hurt my son-"

Jin Ling blinked, "Ah, it's fine. Uncle Wei saved me before I got suffocated-"

Instead of reassuring them, it seemed to make his parents panic even more,
"SUFFOCATED?! A-LING, ARE YOU OKAY?!"

"Where does it hurt? Are your meridians okay? Are there any bruises? Can papa kiss it better? How is your breathing? Okay, watch me and copy what I do. Inhale.. Exhale.. Inhale... Exhale.."

Jin Ling slightly flushed under their worried looks.

..Having overprotective parents wasn't so bad after all.

A loud snort in the distance was followed by a familiar voice, "Pff, little mistress, your smile makes you look more girly."

"SHUT UP!!"

Wei Wuxian sighed, "Way to ruin the moment, Jingyi."

In the distance, Jiang Cheng scoffed, "Like you're one to talk."

"Ay, what did you say, Cheng-Cheng? Don't think I haven't forgotten about that time you barged into my room demanding soup from Shijie! That bowl was for me!! Me!! And you ate it!!"

"I only ate *some*. What are you talking about? And don't call me Cheng-Cheng!"

"When shijie was brushing my hair that one time, did you really think I never noticed when you stole *three* pieces of pork from my bowl?!"

"What-" Jiang Cheng spluttered, "That- That was-"

"Now, now, boys." Jiang Yanli smiled like the angel she was, "Let's not fight. When we get back, I can make you some Lotus Root and Pork Rib soup."

Although he wasn't relevant to the conversation, Jin Zixuan nodded anyways. His wife was very amazing! And beautiful! And talented! And nice! And the best! And wonderful! And his wife!! His wife!! How did he land himself such a wonderful woman?

Madam Jin and Yu Ziyuan were delighted watching the two.

Jiang Cheng and Wei Wuxian were sending Jin Zixuan disgusted faces.

"Ew, he looks so love-struck that it's disgusting."

"Wei Wuxian, I'd say the same thing about you and Lan Wangji. But you're right, how dare he drool over A-Jie!"

"Lan Zhan and I are different. We just-- *are*. But at least Jin Zixuan is not so much of a peacock anymore."

"Right, right, he's a baby peacock now, I'd say."

"But Jin Zixuan and Shijie are married!! We have to watch him look at Shijie with those eyes.. He looks like a beast!"

"A beast.. That's fairly accurate."

"He's a beast whereas Shijie is an innocent little lamb! She's going to be devoured whole!! Oh no!! We must save shijie!!"

Lan Wangji chuckled.

Jiang Yanli hid her smile behind a sleeve, "Beast? Little lamb? I see.."

Someone in the corner snorted, "How do conversations go so off-topic these days?"

Wei Wuxian nuzzled his face further into Lan Wangji's robes, "Th-Th-Th-Th-Th- Then let's go take a look.."

"I still don't know how to feel about the whole 'Afraid of dogs' thing.."

"Aish, I have to agree with you there."

When Lan Wangji made no motion of moving, Wei Wuxian stuttered, "H-Hanguang-Jun.. Why aren't you moving?.. Move! If you don't move, then what do I do?"

Li Daiyu choked on air, "When I get overwhelmed with emotions like this, I start crying. This is too wholesome!"

"Agreed! Those two are so pure!"

Lan Wangji sighed through his nose, "First.. Let go."

"Unhand Lan Wangji, you filthy demon! I bet you're planning on killing him the moment his back is turned!" Sect Leader Yao yelled.

"Can you stop saying things like that, it's getting super annoying now."

Wen Ruohan sighed, "Lan Wangji, can't you silence him again?!"

"How dare you-" Sect Leader Yao abruptly cut off.

"Thanks, Lan Wangji!" The girls added.

"You have our gratitude!"

After a while of walking, the two successfully traversed deeper into the cedarwood forest, yet the spiritual dog's barks ceased to stop.

Wei Wuxian clung onto Lan Wangji's sleeve, "Dog! Where's the dog?"

Lan Wangji's hands, which had been placed over his husband's ears, tightened their hold.

Lan Wangji assured, "It's far away. Don't worry."

"He's right, Wei Wuxian. With him here, you don't need to worry about anything!"

"The dogs can't get you!"

"We'll protect you!"

Chapter End Notes

I'm not sure whether cultivators knew about the earth being a sphere, but surely they could find out somehow using cultivation?

I don't know where this book is going, I feel like it's so messy lol. I personally don't like my own writing but what can I do _(^__^)/

Also, though I hate Madam Yu, I want her to kind of see Wei Ying's suffering and try to understand him?

I don't know, I can just picture their interactions being so awkward afterward-

And about the "Conversations are going so off-topic these days" I'm sorry about that! I just end up writing random things and can't find it in myself to delete paragraphs because I like seeing a high word-count (╥﹏╥)

I plan for a bunch of things to be in each chapter but my memory is so bad that I even forget to note them down.

I almost forgot to add Wei Ying's fear of dogs lmao

Ah, just a question: How do you guys feel about Xue Yang? I know empathy is a while away, but I've started to write it lol.

Personally, when I found out what he did, I wanted to break his spine. But throughout the Yi City arc, I sort of pitied him. (And definitely didn't cry at the end) It was a love-hate thing.

I know that there are some people who hate Xue Yang and some that like him, but I need some references for the reactions aha. I don't want to get writer's block later on.

Stone Castles - The Present

Chapter Summary

Jin Ling is found!! Yay \(\geq\backslash\leq\)/

Chapter Notes

Hello there! And yes, I infact did not die! Just a little break hehe.
If you were worried about me abandoning this work, I won't. If I take too long to write a chapter, it's just me having writer's block or being lazy (__*) Z z z
The reason it has taken so long is because I've accidentally started to write future chapters. I don't know how it happened, but it just did lol
I wrote this all in one sitting, so I apologize if it is messy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Wei Wuxian hesitantly glanced around to see any sign of the dog, "H-Hanguang-Jun.. I don't see any monsters here. The man-eating castle must just be a rumor. Let's go back."

A middle-aged man sighed, "Aiyo, what happened to the fearsome Yiling Patriarch? I used to think he was a blood-thirsty demon who would eat my children if I wasn't careful..."

Lan Wangji spoke, "It's Jin Ling's dog, Fairy."

"Fairy?" Jiang Fengmian looked quite constipated, "...I see he got his gift of naming from A-Cheng..."

Wei Wuxian startled, "Jin Ling?"

"It is barking furiously." Lan Wangji informed, "It must see something."

His attention distracted from the dog, Wei Wuxian narrowed his eyes, 'Could it be.. The arm?'

"Well he recovered awfully fast."

"Right, what happened to the 'Hanguang-Jun, there's a scary dog, save me! Since I love you so, I shall leap into your arms like a frail maiden!' "

Wei Wuxian blinked, "Frail maiden...? What-"

"But going back to what he said.. Or thought... Who cares--The arm *could* play a part in this. Having such vigorous resentful energy could mean anything."

"But didn't Hanguang-Jun and Senior Wei seal the arm back in Gusu? Why would it be in Qinghe?"

"It could have escaped! Wei Wuxian and Lan Wangji surely had trouble suppressing its power."

"Or perhaps... Perhaps it's the rest of the body!"

"You're so smart! I never would have thought of that!"

"This way!" With a gasp, he sprinted forwards, Lan Wangji following close behind.

"Lan Wangji looks like that husband who would carry all of his wife's bags when they go on a trip."

"He looks like the kind of husband who would cook dinner and take care of the kids while his wife is lazing around in bed."

"And the kind of husband who would teach his children sword forms while their mother is running about doing who-knows-what."

"And the kind of husband who would chuck money around when his wife is shopping."

"Hold up, that last one is already known facts."

"Right," A Lan disciple turned around, "Why are you guys making up Hanguang-Jun's life?"

"Well, they aren't that far off.." Another Lan muttered.

When they finally stopped, Wei Wuxian glanced around, "Something is not right."

"Mn," Lan Wangji hummed, "It's a maze."

"Oh no! Lan Wangji and Wei Wuxian have encountered a great conundrum! How will they advance forwards? Keep watching to find out!"

Wei Wuxian and Lan Wangji furthered deeper into the cedarwood forest and were eventually faced with a variety of stone castles.

Nie Mingjue heavily sighed, "So much for security.."

"Oh no! There is more stone! Could it be, they are legendary puppets by the stone Goddess?!"

"Calm down, brother. They are just the stone castles that dude was talking about."

"But after that statue abuse, I don't trust them near stone anymore.." The person who spoke made a strained face.

"..."

Wei Wuxian contemplated their surroundings, 'So there really are stone castles inside the Xinglu Ridge. Seems like the legends didn't appear out of thin air after all.'

Nie Huaisang really wanted his fan.

Suddenly, a dog's bark once again resounded within the distance. Wei Wuxian jolted and immediately hid behind Lan Wangji, "Why is it still here.. Where's its owner?! Why did its owner disappear?!"

Wen Ruohan made a sound that resembled a kettle.

Lan Wangji spoke, "As such a loyal guardian, it won't leave its master's side. So he must be nearby."

Wei Wuxian screeched, "Why is it coming over here?!"

"The dog is spiritual, is it not? It's leading you to something, follow it!"

A girl replied, "But Wei Wuxian is scared. You can't ask him to do that."

Lan Wangji spoke, "Let us go inside to see."

Wei Wuxian sniffled, "How? There's no door."

"You make your own door." A Nie disciple added, completely ignorant to the fact that he was encouraging the divulgence of his own Sect's secret.

Wei Wuxian began to yell as fairy tugged on his robes, "Lan Zhan! Lan Zhan, Lan Zhan, Lan Zhan!"

"Oh? It seems he forgot about his whole 'Mo Xuanyu Act'."

"But there's no point in continuing it, Lan Wangji already knows it's him."

"But Wei Wuxian is a dense brick, remember? He obviously can't tell."

The dog dragged Wei Wuxian, who was dragging Lan Wangji, to one of the stone castles, where a large hole was already embedded into the stone.

The person who was previously speaking about stone abuse looked extremely troubled, "That poor stoneling.."

"Stoneling? What's that?"

"A baby stone.."

"Uh.."

Lan Wangji put a hand to the destroyed rubble, "A spiritual weapon broke it."

Wei Wuxian spoke, "Jin Ling must've broken through the stone castle by force before something happened to him when he went in."

Jiang Yanli bit her lip, "A-Ling.." She shared a worried glance with her husband, "A-Xuan, he will be fine, right?"

Although it was events that have already happened, it did nothing to ease the worry etched in her heart.

"He's our son, A-Li," Jin Zixuan snuggled closer to his family, "He's here with us now, is he not?"

Somewhere behind Wen Ruohan, a girl cooed.

As they entered with short footsteps, Lan Wangji unsheathed bichen by an inch to use as a source of light.

The deeper they went, the more dark and spacious it became.

Lan Wangji spoke, "How is it?"

Suddenly, a loud ringing erupted within the room. Wei Wuxian gave a pained groan as he covered his ears with both hands.

"Ow."

"My poor ears."

"I think that did permanent damage."

"What's wrong?" Lan Wangji worriedly asked.

"Stop pretending you don't know, Lan Wangji."

"That was so loud, how could you not notice?"

"Did you guys ever stop to think that only Wei Wuxian heard it?"

"Oh. Perhaps you're right."

"Maybe it's because he's a demonic cultivator."

"It might be the resentment of spirits!"

Wei Wuxian spoke, "It's so noisy."

Seeing that an unknown force was keeping Fairy outside, Lan Wangji deduced, "There must be an incantation to stop spirits and monsters from entering."

"Well it certainly didn't stop Wei Wuxian." A Yao disciple added with a chuckle.

"No one asked you." Li Daiyu rolled her eyes, "Keep your nasty comments to yourself."

"Huh?" Wei Wuxian complained, the ringing now a mild chime, "No door, no window, and no spirits! That's quite interesting."

"So the noise *wasn't* resentful spirits? Then what was it?"

Wei Wuxian pulled out his own brand-new compass of evil. The hand spasmed, twisting and turning in a full circle continuously.

"The compass of evil.. Didn't those rogue cultivators say it was faulty?"

"Their one didn't work because they were faced with a Goddess Statue, not a resentful being."

Lan Wangji spoke, "A trap door." Wei Wuxian glanced up in interest.

"This feels like a little adventure," Jingyi squealed, "It's exciting!"

One of the large stone walls began to rise, dropping heaps of stones and rocks, as well as leaving a cloud of smoke.

A long hallway was displayed before them, much narrower than the space before, but more delicately designed.

Lan Wangji infused his qi into the row of torches hung on the wall and watched as they lit up in flames, illuminating the dark hallway.

"Woah, that looked handsome."

"Really handsome."

"Extremely handsome."

"Marry me, Lan Wangji."

"No."

Meanwhile, Jingyi was sprawled out on the floor, laughing hysterically.

At the end of the hallway was yet another large room, except an altar lied in the middle with a large coffin displayed on top of the stone platform. There was dust, debris, bugs, and cobwebs for all to see, signifying that it was old and had remained untouched for years.

"A coffin? This is my first time seeing a coffin!"

"The only coffin I've seen is my great-grandmas, but I was like four!!"

"That's kinda deep, but okay!!"

"Ha! I knew I was right! The rest of the body is in that coffin!"

They both climbed up the short stairs and stood on the altar, the small gust of wind that followed inducing more dust from the room.

"It's an old coffin! That means it's been there for an old time!"

"Don't you mean long time?"

"Right, long time! But there's a lot of resentment within the arm, which means it has gathered for a while!"

"How smart! I never would have linked that together!"

"Guys, we should do this more! We're so smart we'll be solving murder cases in a matter of seconds!"

"Yeah! By the looks of it, the Yiling Patriarch hasn't even figured it out!"

"Haha, we're too intelligent for our own good."

Wei Wuxian placed a hand on the coffin, "Nice coffin."

"Wei Wuxian," Wen Qing sighed as she rubbed the bridge of her nose, "You haven't changed a bit."

"But seriously," Jiang Cheng added with a pair of rolling eyes, "You don't just waltz up to a coffin and say it looks nice. You just--don't."

He infused a hand with demonic qi and slammed his palm into the lid, watching as it immediately opened.

"Wow!"

"That looks awesome!! Someone teach me that!"

"What's going to be inside? Keep watching to find out!"

"Stop, this really isn't a theatre show."

Without warning, a heavy pressure released from within the coffin, followed by a loud noise, but Wei Wuxian and Lan Wangji had yet to falter.

When the instance finally ended, Wei Wuxian removed his hands from his ears with a gasp. "What?"

Within the coffin lied not a corpse, but a saber.

"What?"

"Why is a saber there?

"Isn't that what the Nie Sect cultivates with?"

"But why would they make a coffin for it?"

"Perhaps it is to show respect?"

Wei Wuxian hummed, "It's my first time seeing a coffin made for a blade."

"Mine too!"

"Mine three!"

"Mine four!"

Jiang Cheng was sure he was going to end up Qi Deviating like Lan Qiren at this point, "We get it, you agree."

Lan Wangji spoke, "There must be a reason for having a blade in a coffin and the protective incantation placed on it."

Wei Wuxian startled, "And Jin Ling! Where is Jin Ling?!"

Jin Ling wouldn't admit it aloud, but he was touched by the concern.

Lan Wangji sent him a side glance, "We will know soon."

Walking deeper inside, they found coffins similar to the first within the other chambers as well. Both the ages and the materials of the coffins were different. And inside every coffin, there lied a long saber.

Wei Wuxian observed, '*This is the last room. There's still only sabers inside the coffins.*'

Nie Mingjue made a constipated face.

After shutting the lid to the coffin, Wei Wuxian and Lan Wangji shared a glance.

Lan Wangji pulled out his guqin, Wangji, and began to play inquiry.

"What's he doing?" A Jiang disciple questioned.

"He's playing inquiry, a song known to the Lan Clan." A Lan disciple answered, "It lets you communicate with souls."

"With souls..?!" One of the girls squeaked, "Perhaps.. Perhaps he did that for Wei Wuxian when he died!"

"Oh my goodness!"

"So romantic!"

"*So romantic!*" A Jin disciple mocked, "Did you not pay attention at the beginning of this? It said Wei Wuxian's soul couldn't be summoned. Stop daydreaming."

"Bro, who remembers stuff like that? The beginning was like ten years ago.."

"Besides, *playing* it for Wei Wuxian and being *answered* is different!"

"Right, even if he didn't play it for thirteen years, I'll still believe he did! And I'll do that because I can, and I want to!!"

"Such passion! Girl, I'm with you!"

"Me too!"

"Me three!"

Wei Wuxian watched with interest, "Hanguang-Jun, ask a few questions for me. Where is this place? What's it used for? Who built it?"

When the song finally ended, Lan Wangji placed his hands on the strings.

"That sounded really pretty."

"As expected of Lan Wangji, the pride of GusuLan!"

Wei Wuxian asked, "What did it say?"

Lan Wangji replied, "I do not know."

Various people glanced between Lan Wangji and Nie Huaisang with barely-contained snickers.

"Huh?"

Lan Wangji repeated, "It said -I do not know-"

"Oh."

A chuckle, "Is Sect Leader Nie dead? He's right here though.."

"That really wasn't funny dude."

"It really wasn't."

Wei Wuxian stared incredulously, '*What a person Lan Zhan has become. He's even learned how to make me speechless.*'

"Indeed, what a person he has become." Li Daiyu shook her head with a smile, "Ah, the way age can make some people look more handsome."

"Uh," Nie Huaisang blinked, "Li-Guniang, I think he was talking about Lan Wangji's personality."

Wei Wuxian hummed in thought, "Ask it again. Does it know who killed it?"

After receiving the same response, Wei Wuxian spoke, "It still doesn't know? Then ask it if it used to be a man or a woman. There's no way it doesn't know."

"Male." **Lan Wangji replied after a short moment.**

Wei Wuxian narrowed his eyes, "He definitely knows something. Ask if a fifteen or sixteen-year-old boy has come here before."

"Yes."

A gasp erupted from Jiang Yanli, "A-Ling.."

"Then where is he now?"

Lan Wangji raised his head, "It said -Right Here-"

"So Jin Ling is with them? Where is he? Is he hiding?"

Wei Wuxian frowned, "But we've searched through the whole place and never saw Jin Ling. Did he lie?"

The Lans tried not to laugh at him.

They failed spectacularly.

Lan Wangji spoke, "When answering inquiry, spirits are unable to lie. They can either choose not to talk or tell the truth."

After watching the spirit make its reply, Wei Wuxian spoke, "What did you ask?"

"How old he is. Where he is from." Lan Wangji replied.

"And?"

"Fifteen. From Lanling."

"Oh noes."

"Little Mistress.."

"Young Jin.."

Wei Wuxian's eyes widened, '*So the soul that inquiry found was Jin Ling?!*'

"Wait," A Jin disciple mockingly held a hand to his chin as he pretended to think, "What was that, little Lans? I thought you said that it can only be performed on deceased souls.." He smirked, openly showing ridicule, "I suppose your clan techniques are outdated."

"You idiot, it can be performed on any soul. The young Jin's soul was still clinging to his body, but it was still qualified to reply to inquiry. Stuuupid."

"How am I stupid?! You're the one who clearly said it's only used on dead people!"

"I never said that!" The Lan snapped back, "It's used to contact deceased souls! I never said that was the only use!"

"Yes you did! Shut up!"

"Peacock!"

"Ant!"

"Pea brain!"

"Horse dung!"

Jingyi was busy laughing throughout the entire conversation, "Horse dung? I'm dead-"

Wei Wuxian hurriedly asked, "Have you got Jin Ling's location?"

"Stand where you are, face the southwest, and listen to the notes." Lan Wangji instructed. "After each note is played, walk forward by a step. When the sounds stop, he will be in front of you."

Wei Wuxian followed the command, and soon found himself standing before the wall, 'He's inside the wall?!"

"Little Mistress..." Jingyi trailed off, "How was it living inside a wall? Was it comfortable?"

"Of course it's *you* who's asking," Jin Ling gave into the temptation of rolling his eyes, "I'm sure you'd enjoy it. Go walk into a wall, I'll help get you inside if it makes you shut up."

"Really? You would-"

"It was sarcasm, Jingyi."

"...Oh." Lan Jingyi raised his head, "But if you're really willing to-"

"Stop right there." Jin Ling chided, "I am not burying you inside a wall. I don't want to be blamed for child murder if you happen to suffocate to death."

"..Child murder..?"

"Jingyi, I'll help you!" Ouyang Zizhen chirped, and was once again slapped at the back of the head.

Lan Wangji unsheathed bichen and smoothly sliced at the wall four times, before watching as it crumbled to the floor. Wei Wuxian furiously clawed at the wall until Jin Ling's face came into view, "Jin Ling! Thank heavens he's still alive!"

"A-Ling!" Both Jiang Yanli and Jin Zixuan called.

Jin Ling frowned (read: pouted), "Sorry for making you worry..."

Lan Wangji spoke, "We seemed to have caught the still-alive soul that was about to leave his body."

"Still-alive soul?!"

A Lan disciple smirked, "Stupid Jin, looks like I was right!"

"Shut up!" The Jin replied.

Meanwhile, a confused Lan Qiren shook his head, "What has happened to my Lans..? They are all such barbarians now.."

Wei Wuxian began to pull Jin Ling's body out, "It wasn't long since he was buried inside. If we took just a second longer, he would've suffocated to death."

"Young Master!" The Jins frantically turned to face Jin Ling.

Another sighed in relief, "Thank goodness they got there when they did!"

Jingyi looked on the verge of tears, "Little Mistress, you nearly *died*?"

Jin Ling huffed, "No! I wasn't gonna die! But you are probably having second thoughts of being buried in the wall, aren't you?"

Just as Jin Ling's torso escaped, a skeletal arm reached out from within the wall and hauled him back. Despite its efforts, Wei Wuxian was most definitely stronger than a weak hand of bones, "What's this?"

"Ew."

"Is that-?!"

"Is that the young Jin's arm?! But-" They glanced to Jin Ling, who's arm was, infact, perfectly fine.

"Oh wait, I can see both of his shoulders. His arms are fine."

"Wow, I see it too. What idiot said it was *his* arm?"

"You."

As Lan Wangji began to check Jin Ling's pulse, Wei Wuxian poked his head through the hole in the wall, "Could anything else be buried inside this wall apart from Jin Ling?"

"Uh, maybe skeletons? I mean, we just saw an arm.."

Upon witnessing a rotten skeleton embedded within the dirt, Wei Wuxian gasped, "Don't tell me.."

He pulled apart the wall once again, widening the gap, as well as revealing a second skeleton. "These.."

"Is that what I'll look like when I die? That's really ugly.."

'I know now! The inside of this stone castle's thick walls was packed with human corpses!'

The screen faded into black.

Nie Huaisang was hiding behind his big shield, also known as Wen Ruohan.

"Now everybody has found out," Nie Mingjue facepalmed, "Our ancestors' secret that we have so heavily guarded is now disclosed to the public.."

The Jins were already raising their noses like a herd of peacocks.

"So, Chifeng-Zun. You've slaughtered people and used them for your own purposes!"

"How selfish!"

"No, it's simply unrighteous! How can you call yourselves cultivators?!"

"Why did these idiots get resurrected again?" Someone muttered.

"We didn't kill anybody!" Nie Huaisang yelled, and immediately regretted it after everyone's eyes drifted to him. He muttered a small, "They were bodies about to become fierce corpses.. And even if living people were buried, we didn't kill them!"

"Oh?" Jin Zixun snarled, "You didn't kill them? So people just happened to find the castles and buried themselves? That's awfully convenient."

"No.." Nie Huaisang really wanted to cry. Perhaps he already was. "Grave robbers took some of the corpses... The castle killed them, not us.."

"Right, of course we believe you, *head-shaker*."

"Chifeng-Zun calls himself righteous, yet he does this behind all of the Clans' backs! Such hypocrisy!"

"Shut up." Jingyi said, because he really wanted them to. He hated Jins, the Little Mistress and his very few friends an exception. "Do you stupid peacocks have nothing else to do? Why are you sticking your nose in the Nie Clan's business?"

The Jins simply turned away with a few tongue-clicks and huffs.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter was quite short compared to the others, and I'm really sorry about that lol.
I'll try to make the next one longer! <3

Also, Jingyi and Jin Ling make the bestest of friends. I love them so much (≧▽≦)♡

Right, so next episode, before they leave the stone castle, I'm going to add a little flashback of when Wei Ying was a kid since so many people requested it lol.

And a certain someone will be there to watch (。•◡•)✧

Please leave a comment! Although I do not reply to most of them, I read every single one :)

Next Chapter: Wei Wuxian meets the Angry Purple Lotus himself! \(^▽^)/

A cacophony of lies I - Present

Chapter Summary

Jiang Cheng scaring the life out of Wei Ying.

Chapter Notes

I did tell you guys that this chapter was going to be longer. I just didn't tell you that it would be 10k words.. hehe.. he.. Writinggg!! 🎉

I actually sat there for an hour and a half editing this *sob*

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"Jin Ling," Jiang Cheng smiled at the junior, "Why did you not tell me about any of this?"

Jin Ling trembled. JiuJiu was scary when he shouted, was scary when he was sad, was scary when--Okay, he's just always scary! JiuJiu never smiles, he always glares or scowls at people, which is why seeing his mouth pull into an unnatural tilt was so terrifying.

"I-" Jin Ling licked his dry lips, "W-What do you mean, JiuJiu.."? He was so dead.

Jiang Cheng's smile never faltered, "Now, why don't we start with the reason you were in those stone castles in the first place.."

Meanwhile, Wei Wuxian sent a silent prayer to Jin Ling. *'Little Peacock, I'll remember to light incense for you when I leave!'*

-
Jingyi was pulling an ugly face as he stared at the platform, a hand stroking his chin.

"Stop that, you look like Lan Qiren." Ouyang Zizhen deadpanned.

"Oh," Jingyi exclaimed, hurriedly pulling his hands back, "I was just thinking about how happy those three are together.. I doubt they'd want any interference-"

"Who? Xiao Xingchen and his two little fans?" Ouyang Zizhen stood beside Jingyi, now also staring at the platform "What's the problem?"

"Well, on the bit where you bring people to not-dead, it doesn't let me back out. I want to push the last one, but I know what they are."

Ouyang Zizhen looked like life itself tired him, "Speak properly."

"You see this thingy you press here?" A nod. "That's the last person from Yi City. Do you remember Yi City?" Another nod. "I don't care, anyways, I have to choose this person but I know who-"

"Then just choose them," Ouyang Zizhen reasoned, pressing his finger on [Character 4]

For a brief moment, there was a flash of white.

"You idiot!" Lan Jingyi yelled.

"You're the idiot!" Ouyang Zizhen parroted.

"Why did you do that?! We're all gonna die!"

"Well--It's your fault for being so indecisive!"

"Hey! No it's not! You just resurrected Xue-whatever-his-name-is!"

"Why does it matter that I resurrected Xue-whatever-his-name-is?! He can't hurt us without a golden core!"

"You idiot! He could just go *bam!* *pow!* and smash us like little ants!"

"Why are you comparing me to an ant?!"

"Cause you're an ant! So shut up!"

-
Amidst the crowd stood a tall man clad in black, a curious smile spread across his face. Although his eyes appeared bright, they portrayed casual contempt deep within, matching with the two canines displayed. He glanced around curiously, his head tilted to the side.

As soon as his eyes fell on a particular group, a wide grin spread across Xue Yang's face.

"Xiao. Xing. Chen."

-
"Okay, so, like, what do we do?" Ouyang Zizhen nervously fanned himself with a hand as he paced in circles.

Jingyi gulped, "Uh, tell A-Niang?"

"Good plan," Ouyang Zizhen paused in his steps, before sending a curious glance to Jingyi, "Right, how do you know it's Xue-whatever-his-name-is? It could be anyone."

"Little Qing, Xiao Xingchen, the Ghost General's long-lost brother, and Xue-whatever-his-name-is were the only people we met in Yi City. Everyone else was..." Jingyi waved a hand

over his neck in a slashing motion.

"Wait, wait, wait." Ouyang Zizhen raised an eyebrow, "The ghost general's long-lost brother?"

"Big guy, fierce corpse." Jingyi reminded.

"Right, I know who you mean. Should we go tell Senior Wei now?"

"That's a good idea."

Xiao Xingchen could feel his arms tremble, his body shaking as each second passed. His mind was a mess, with each thought coherent enough to make out the screams of 'Xue Yang'!

Beside him, A-Qing tensed. Although she herself was terrified, she squeezed his hand to comfort him.

Song Lan was emitting killing intent.

"Little blind Qing," Xue Yang continued, taking slow steps closer. Xiao Xingchen could only hear the clinking of boots and the madness in his voice. His breaths sped up and his heart pounded so loud that he distinctly wondered whether everyone else could hear it too--Xue Yang probably could, judging by that maniacal smile sent to him.

"Though, it seems you're not so blind anymore, what a pity." he tutted with a fake pout, "Surely you wouldn't mind if I blinded you again?"

A-Qing flinched.

"Since you liked pretending to be blind so much, I'm simply doing you a favor. Aren't I so kind?" Xue Yang began to laugh, much to A-Qing's horror.

Song Lan raised his sheathed sword in warning, his usual cold gaze seemingly colder, "Xue Yang. Take one more step and I'll kill you myself. Don't say I didn't warn you."

Xue Yang chuckled, "Song Daozhang, I was so used to you being an obedient little corpse that I never acknowledged your presence." He bowed respectfully, "Sorry for the late greeting. You must have missed me *dearly* ."

Song Lan clenched his sword, ears bearing into slits, " *Xue Yang* . "

" *Xiao Xingchen* , " Xue Yang's smile went impossibly wider, "You need to restrain your friend here. He's quite wild."

His tone became delighted as he continued with a maniacal smile, "I preferred him when he was a corpse. He never disobeyed me then, but instead followed each of my orders, even when I ordered him to slaughter those young cultivators who came to visit us!" A peal of delighted laughter erupted from his throat.

"Xue Yang," Xiao Xingchen spat, grimacing at the way it rolled off his tongue, "Get lost."

Xue Yang placed a hand to his heart, "Ah, Daozhang, I'm so hurt. How could you tell me to get lost? Weren't we close friends for so long?" His laughter was as cold as the shivers trailing down Xiao Xingchen's body.

"XUE YANG!" It was Wei Wuxian this time, storming over in all his glory.

Those in the room watched in interest. The Yiling Patriarch was getting involved! Things were getting spicy!

"Eh? Yiling Patriarch, it's such an honor!" Xue Yang mocked, "I'm just getting reacquainted with my *friends* here, you see. It's been so long."

Wei Wuxian grabbed both of Xue Yang's wrists, "Jingyi!"

"Yes!" Lan Jingyi began to wrap a rope around Xue Yang's torso, much to the latter's amusement.

"Ah, you're tying me up?" Xue Yang chuckled, "How righteous of you, Yiling Patriarch. You're truly admirable."

Wei Wuxian's eyebrow twitched, "And you're being oddly obedient."

"Being tied up like this is giving me nostalgia," Xue Yang sent him a wide smile, "It's *exhilarating*."

Wei Wuxian sent him an indecipherable look.

"How did your little journey go?" Xue Yang smoothly changed the topic, even as ropes were knotted together around his body, "Ah, how is my old friend Meng Yao doing? Is he here? I'd love to see him and show my *appreciation*."

Several people began to murmur.

"He's right, is Jin Guangyao here?"

"I could have sworn I saw him when we first got here."

"Where'd he go?"

When Wei Wuxian finally finished tying him up, he sent Xue Yang a glare, "Don't even think of trying anything, or else you can say bye-bye to your second life."

Xue Yang chuckled, "So scary, Yiling Patriarch."

Wei Wuxian rubbed his temples, "I can't give him to Nie Mingjue, he'd decapitate Xue Yang straight away. Wen Ruohan probably won't even watch him.." The last part was a small mutter.

Wei Wuxian turned to Jingyi, "Watch over him, will you? He can't do you any harm. If something happens, tell me immediately, okay?"

Jingyi practically glowed in excitement. A-Niang was trusting him to watch this stupid delinquent! "Yes!"

Wei Wuxian sent him a small smile, "I trust you, Jingyi."

Xue Yang glanced to Lan Jingyi and stared, "You're entrusting a little brat with me? He's no older than 20, how cute. I can kill him with the flick of a finger!"

Xue Yang was clearly unaware of how everybody was powerless in the room because Jingyi began to drag him along by the rope.

No physical strength can rival that of the Lans'! Wei Wuxian thought with a smirk.

-

"Little Lan," Xue Yang chuckled, "Want to hear a story?"

Jingyi sternly replied, "No." He wasn't going to be tricked!

"Well, I'll tell you anyway." Xue Yang said, because it worked on Xiao Xingchen and A-Qing, "There was once a homeless child who scavenged the streets for food."

-

"They're having story time over there!" A young cultivator exclaimed.

"No fair! I want storytime! Mother said it was too babyish so she stopped reading to me!"

"Woah, Mr. Storyteller looks like a mermaid all tied up like that."

"A mermaid?" Another scoffed, "How does someone being tied up remind you of a mermaid?"

"Now that I think of it, that's kinda dark..."

"Right.. it's about the way mermaids were tied up and captured years ago. I heard that's how the Jin Sect acquired all of their riches!"

"Shut up dude, this is getting way off-topic."

"He's right. Though, are we having a break before they start the next episode? If that's the case, I wanna listen to the story too!"

"Are you mad?! That's the delinquent Xue Yang!"

"Xue Yang?" A gasp, "I heard he helped Jin Guangyao with his schemes!"

"What?! Mr. Storyteller is a bad guy?! Why is that Lan listening to his stories then?!"

"Who knows.."

Xue Yang continued, "The child could hear the crunch of his bones as the wheel rode over his fingers, and watched as one of them was crushed so hard that it was severed right off his hand. There was blood everywhere. The remains of his pinkie finger scattered around--"

Jingyi weakly raised a hand, "Um, dude, this is getting quite disturbing.."

Xue Yang simply chuckled, "Did I scare you, little Lan?"

"Yes," Jingyi replied, because he was scared.

"What on earth is that delinquent telling my son..?" Wei Wuxian sent a glare to Xue Yang as he watched the way Jingyi shivered.

"Should I go kill him, Wei Ying?" Lan Wangji said, because he obviously wanted to protect his son too.

"Go tell Jiang Cheng to watch over him. Just in case.."

"Mn. So should I..?" Lan Wangji trailed off.

Wei Wuxian bit back a smile. Lan Zhan was so eager to protect his little ducklings, it was cute.

"Leave that job to Song Lan," Wei Wuxian turned to the said person. "If I didn't know any better, I would think that glare alone was enough to kill him."

"Uh, so, like, who's gonna start it?" Li Daiyu asked, clearly impatient.

"Hmph! I guess I will!" A-Qing threw her bamboo pole to the floor, her smile clearly delighted at all of the gasps received, and made her way to the platform. Xue Yang was tied up, so she was really happy.

"It's so simple. I think you lot are just too dumb to figure it out! You just need to put your finger on the thingy then push down on the thingy." (She didn't mention how Jingyi taught her how to do it.)

On the screen, large text appeared. [Episode Six (第六集)]

The screen graduated into a scene of a winter day, the snow was thick and littered with footprints of animals and humans alike.

"Eh? What in the Yama[1] is this?" Xue Yang raised an eyebrow to Lan Jingyi, who was desperately trying not to choke on his laughter.

A few snorts escaped, despite the hand tightly held over his mouth, "Yama? What, is that a dead joke?"

"Ah, I'm glad you caught on to my sense of humor." Xue Yang's lips pulled into a smirk, "I was always known for my killer puns."

"Stop- Just stop-" Jingyi slapped his knee, chest vibrating in hysterical laughter.

Ouyang Zizhen listened in curiously, "Hey." He whispered.

When he received no answer, he prevailed, "Psssssssst!"

There was still no reply, so Ouyang Zizhen shoved past the two people he was wedged between and grabbed Jingyi's shoulder, "Dude, you ok? Has Xue-whatever-his-name-is affected you with his craziness?" A pause. "Sect Leader Jiang is glaring at you, by the way."

Jingyi paled, "What? Did I do something wrong? I never thought there'd be a time I'd cause more trouble than A-Niang—"

"No, I think he's annoyed that you're laughing." Ouyang Zizhen pointed at Jiang Cheng's face, "I don't think he can. It's kinda sad."

"Oh." Was Jingyi's reply. He turned to Xue Yang, "Hey, can you tell another dead joke?"

Xue Yang stared at him for a brief moment before looking away, "Mocking a Sect Leader behind his back. I never knew Lans knew such undignified behavior."

Ouyang Zizhen stared, "You... You.."

Lan Jingyi was in tears, "Haha, good one! You got me there!"

Alone, within a small corner of an alleyway sat a child. Its body was marred with bite marks and bruises, its arms were scarily pale and hair was in disarray.

Xue Yang's eyes flickered with familiarity.

Jingyi sent him a curious look.

Wei Wuxian's lips trembled, "That's.. But.. *how* ?"

Lan Wangji's eyebrows furrowed, "Wei Ying?"

The child sobbed while clutching its legs tighter against its chest, "Mama, papa.. When are you coming back?"

"A..A-Xian?" Jiang Fengmian stuttered.

"..That's Wei Wuxian?" Madam Yu spat out with gritted teeth.

The time he arrived at Lotus Pier, she was too busy.. *yelling* at Fengmian to notice the state the child was in.

Thinking back, it was quite harsh.

But she didn't regret it just yet.

At the same time, various people cooed in pity.

"This poor child.. Just where on earth is this?"

"I want to scoop him up and tell him everything will be alright!" A frustrated groan, "Urghhh! Just where *are* his parents?"

"They clearly aren't suited for parenting if they leave their child out in the snow like this!"

"Now, now, something might have happened to them. You know what life is like for common people."

"They die easily." Another added.

"I heard they can die if you hit them on the head. They're quite fragile, it's a surprise this kid isn't dead yet."

Upon seeing the child, Jiang Cheng's blood ran cold. "Wei.. *Wei Wuxian ?*" It was barely a mutter, but was loud enough for Lan Xichen to hear.

"That's Wei-gongzi..? Just what.. *happened* to him?" His voice was edged in worry, an emotion evident in his features.

If Lan Qiren's eyes flickered with concern, well, there was nobody there to witness it.

Within the alley's entrance, a faint whimper was heard. Alerted and incredibly afraid, the child began to stand up and walked towards a small corner, trying to stay as quiet as

possible.

"That's a dog." Jin Ling informed.

"No shit." Jiang Cheng replied, his voice uncertain and tense.

Jiang Yanli bit her lip, "A-Xian." It pained her to see her XianXian in such a state.

The dogs paused, their eyes finally meeting his. A loud growl interrupted the silence.

The child desperately clawed at the snow, throwing handfuls at the animals, despite knowing it wouldn't change a thing.

"Just grab a knife and slit their throats." Xue Yang sighed as if it were completely obvious.
"Then your situation would end almost immediately."

Jingyi sent him a look.

"Ah, perhaps not a knife then... What about a nearby rock? It's sharp, it's quick, it's efficient, and if the rock is long enough, you could edge it into the dog's skin and let it die of blood loss-"

Jingyi heavily sighed, "Keep your crazy thoughts somewhere else please.."

The child's eyes shimmered with unshed tears, "Don't come near!"

Upon witnessing the obvious aggression towards the child, Li Daiyu's face contorted in fury.
"Get away from him and go eat some raw pig meat, you fiends!"

Nie Huaisang was clearly intimidated by her tone but resolutely nodded in agreement.

Nevertheless, the dogs crept forward, incurring faint whimpers from the child's throat.

He covered his eyes with two hands as if doing so would make the animals go away.

They didn't.

"Stop, this hurts my heart too much. Someone save this child or I will personally whip you like there's no tomorrow!"

"Who will you whip?" Nie Huaisang squeaked.

"I don't know, someone!"

The dogs growled, baring their two sharp canine teeth that were dripping with saliva.

The child clenched his eyes shut, preparing to feel the harsh tug at his skin and the sharp pain that followed not long after.

Except, instead of the familiar teeth digging into his flesh and barking of dogs, a hand gently patted his head, "Wei Ying?"

The entire room was rendered silent, so silent that you could hear a pin drop.

Lan Wangji's face paled, "Wei Ying?"

Wei Wuxian clenched his fists, uncomfortable at everyone seeing him so weak.

"That's the Yiling Patriarch?! You're telling me that he was a beggar?!"

"It could just be someone with the same name-"

"You think everyone has the name 'Wei Ying'?"

"...Fair point."

"You know, if you asked me whether I pitied the Yiling Patriarch yesterday, you'd be with the healers within seconds. Now, however..."

"I knew Jiang Fengmian took him in, but not once has someone said anything about this!"

"His childhood was even worse than that bastard Jin Guangyao's! At least the latter had a place to stay."

"It was a brothel."

"He had a roof over his head."

"But Jin Guangyao was slandered his whole life."

"So was Wei Wuxian."

Wei Ying looked up, only to meet the gaze of Jiang Fengmian, his face etched in worry and concern. He slowly nodded.

Jiang Fengmian sent a wave to one of his disciples, who stepped forward and presented a large slice of melon, "Here, you should eat."

Wei Ying simply glanced between the melon and Jiang Fengmian, as if asking for permission.

"Oh my god , just what on earth has this child been through?"

Jiang Fengmian sent him a reassuring smile, in which he grabbed the food and immediately scarfed it down as if it were the most delicious thing in the world.

"He's already too small for a child. Look at his tiny frame; he'd probably snap if I touched him."

Too focused on eating, Wei Ying missed the way Jiang Fengmian's smile twisted into a concerned frown.

Upon seeing that the child had finished, Jiang Fengmian held out a hand, "Wei Ying, I am friends with your parents. Would you like to come home with me?"

A Jin disciple's face contorted in confusion, "What? I thought Wei Wuxian was Jiang Fengmian's bastard.. So he was just friends with his parents?"

The disciple was slapped on the back of the head by a Jiang, "Idiot, no one said he was Jiang Fengmian's bastard--Okay, maybe they did--But the rumors were never confirmed!"

"But.. But what about Yu Ziyuan?! She clearly hated Wei Wuxian because he was one of Jiang Fengmian's bastards! And.. And Wei Wuxian was favored more than her son!"

"Maybe that last part is true, but I think she hated Wei Wuxian because her and her husband's marriage was arranged."

"Arranged?!"

"Yes, yes, I heard that she was in love with Jiang Fengmian and pressured him into the marriage."

"How selfish!"

"I never liked that woman."

"Do not disrespect my lady!" Jiang Fengmian yelled, rendering the room silent, "I may not be the *best* father, but I love my family all the same. Spread rumors such as that again, and you'll be facing the wrath of YunmengJiang."

If Jiang Cheng's eyes were sparkling with surprise, well, nobody mentioned it.

Jin Zixuan nodded, muttering under his breath, "My father (-in-law) is so cool! I now see where A-Li got her amazing personality from. He's gained my respect!"

Yu Ziyuan stared at her husband incredulously, mouth agape. After being caught in her daze, she snapped her head away, "Hmph! Let them talk! Why should I feel the need to worry

about false rumors that have no basis?"

Jiang Fengmian watched in amusement.

Jiang Fengmian carried Wei Wuxian back to Lotus Pier, all the while sending small smiles to the child who was sleeping on his shoulder.

The screen faded into black.

"Huh?" A middle-aged man frowned, "Is the episode already over? That was awfully quick.."

"I mean," Another added, "The screen hasn't changed to the selection area yet, so probably not."

"Did something go wrong?"

"Guys, did you forget what just happened in the episode? The Yiling Patriarch is a beggar!"

"And?"

"And- Beggars are disgusting mortals, don't you hate him even more?"

"No! What in your right mind would make you think that?!"

"You guys are dying to insult the Yiling Patriarch at every chance you get." Xue Yang added, looking very much *bored* , "Can't you at least say something new? It's all the same."

"Sorry, what?" Jingyi cackled, even as he was busy sending people glares, "Was that another dead joke?"

"Wei Wuxian is a beggar *and* the son of a servant. That's quite the combination, is it not?"

"Shut up bro, no one asked you. Did you forget his father was the former head disciple of Yunmeng Jiang, as well as the sworn brother of Jiang Fengmian?!"

"But I heard his parents ran away to elope. It seems they didn't want their son anymore and left him in the streets, aha."

Wen Qing had finally had enough of these lowlives jumping to conclusions and assuming the worst every second of their lives, "Shut up!"

Everyone immediately went silent, apart from a small "yes queen" from Wen Ruohan.

"Have any of you ever stopped to think about how A-Xian feels?!" She continued, fury coursing through her veins.

Wei Wuxian gaped at the "A-Xian".

Wen Ning sheepishly nodded, "T-That.. T-That is r-right! W-Wei G-Gongzi has- has feelings t-too!" He seemed to stutter even more over the attention.

Wen Qing sent a proud smile to her little brother before continuing, "How do you think he felt when he heard those rumors?"

"What rumors?" Ouyang Zizhen interrupted.

"Son of a servant!" A Jin supplied.

Wen Qing, the Juniors, as well as the wangxian fan group sent them a glare.

"But Shixiong didn't care about those rumors! He knew they weren't true, so he didn't mind!" A Jiang disciple spoke up.

"Didn't care?" Wen Qing chuckled, "You think he didn't care?"

She gestured around the room, "Son of a prostitute."

Meng Yao flinched.

Wen Qing continued, "Do you see what happened to Jin Guangyao because of rumors such as that? Do you see what he *did* to gain approval?!" (Source: Wen Ning)

Various people began to mutter amongst themselves.

"That's right, wasn't he doing it for the approval of Jin Guangshan?"

"But didn't he kill his father?

"He was probably too fed up with the women being invited to Koi Tower everyda- OUCH!
Don't hit me!"

Wen Qing spoke, "A-Xian was fourth in the list of Young Masters, the head disciple of YunmengJiang, and had strength that could rival one of the twin jades!"

"She's right.."

"He sure climbed up the ranks."

"And he did it without scheming; relying on his strength alone.. That's quite admirable."

"Don't forget he's the Yiling Patriarch! He's evil! Inhumane! Disgusting!"

"Of course it's a Jin." Someone muttered.

"Oh? He's the Yiling Patriarch?" Wen Qing chuckled, "Did you forget who defeated Wen Ruohan and won you the sunshot campaign?"

"It was Jin Guangyao right? Why are you twisting the facts to make Wei Wuxian look better?"

"I heard Wei Wuxian slaughtered all of the Wen dogs, and Meng Yao stole his kill."

"WHAT?! So Meng Yao wasn't even deserving of all that war praise?!"

"I mean- He did make the final blow, so technically he is-"

"You came to throw a siege, yet you yourselves were instead faced with a siege." Wen Qing's glare surveyed the room, "You chanted that you were there to destroy evil, yet in the end, you needed the 'evil' to save your own lives."

Wen Ruohan whistled.

Many bowed their heads in shame.

Xue Yang's lips pulled into a smirk, "This woman is quite the person. She's able to turn the tables like this after a single speech."

Jingyi nodded, "A-Niang told me she's the best! ..And that she was scary when she had her needles out! He also said that she was the *real* Yiling Patriarch. She'd make him do the laundry, pick the radishes and even plant the seeds when it was a hot day!!"

Lan Jingyi turned to his left to face Xue Yang but blinked at the sudden pile of ropes lying on the floor.

He glanced around, only to see Xue Yang beaming as he waved to Xiao Xingchen.

'God, this guy..'

Jingyi ended up dragging him back to their spot, tying him up again despite knowing he could easily escape, and glaring at him. (Read: squinting his eyes)

"You got something in your eye?" Xue Yang asked. After being met with silence, he added, "I was just trying to lift your spirits-"

"Oh, shut up."

The scene switched back to Wei Wuxian and Lan Wangji within the Stone Castles.

"Oh, I guess it's back?"

"What happened? Can someone remind me?"

"Uh, the walls had a bunch of skeletons in it. Wei Wuxian found Jin Ling in the wall too."

"Wow, very vague, but thank you."

Rather abruptly, the ringing from before once again penetrated Wei Wuxian's ears.

A bark from Fairy had Wei Wuxian snap out of his stupor.

"Now that I know about Wei Wuxian's childhood, I want this dog to get lost."

"Yeah, it can get lost."

Lan Wangji's attention diverted from where he was tending to Jin Ling to the commotion outside, "Something is happening outside."

Wei Wuxian hauled Jin Ling over his shoulder with surprising ease, "Let's go and see!"

"Mn."

Outside, Fairy's barks continued to persist. Lan Wangji glanced at the dog and pulled out the torn piece of cloth from within its jaws, completely ignorant to Wei Wuxian's cries of 'stop', "Someone must have been hiding."

Nie Huaisang nervously chuckled, "Haha.. I wonder who it was?"

Nie Mingjue raised an eyebrow.

"You go after them," Wei Wuxian spoke, "I'll take Jin Ling back to Qinghe and find a place to rest."

Lan Wangji replied, "There is no need. I know who they are."

Various people asked at once, "Who?"

Wei Wuxian insisted, "I know too. It must've been the same group of people who spread rumors of the Xinglu Ridge, let out the walking corpses, set up the maze array, and built the Stone Castles."

They asked again, "Who?!"

"But if we don't catch them now," He continued, "It'd be more difficult to find them later."

Lan Wangji simply stared at him with an indecipherable expression.

Wen Ruohan narrowed his eyes, "Friends, did you notice that Lan Wangji's gay energy has intensified? Or is it just me?"

"No, I can feel it too."

"Me three."

"Me four."

"Me five."

"Me six."

"Me sev-"

"Okay, we get the point!" Jiang Cheng snapped.

"The place where we met that charlatan, let's meet there." Wei Wuxian spoke, "Go. They'll be gone if you take any longer."

"Was it Jin Guangyao or Su Shit?"

"That's highly probable."

"Spying... It sounds like something they'd do.."

Meanwhile, a certain 'Su Shit' was grumbling under his breath, "Stupid Lans, stupid everyone.."

Wei Wuxian turned his head around to face Lan Wangji, a determined expression within his features, "I will come."

"Wait, don't tell me.."

"Lan Wangji is scared of him leaving..?"

Lan Wangji watched him walk away, his eyes slightly twitching and hands clenched into fists.

"Wangji.." Lan Xichen muttered. He knew Wei Wuxian meant well, but his little brother had waited for thirteen years and was still insecure.

Lan Qiren sighed knowingly. Despite his hatred, he was concerned about what would have become of his nephew had Wei Wuxian not resurrected...

After a brief moment, he too turned around and began to leave.

The girls began to chat amongst themselves, a somber atmosphere.

"I don't know why this makes me so sad.."

"Right, I understand what you mean."

"Perhaps it is because Wei Wuxian is leaving Lan Wangji again? He was only reassured when Wei Wuxian promised he'd come.."

Lan Wangji visibly flinched.

"Oh- Sorry- I mean, it might be because.. Wei Wuxian is putting himself in danger again."

Wei Wuxian suddenly felt a tug on his robes, and yelled at the sudden appearance of Fairy, "WAIIT! TAKE THE DOG AWAY! THE DOG!!"

"A-Xian," Jiang Yanli desperately wanted to jump in and save her XianXian, to shield him from his fears, to hide him away.

And yet, as much as she wanted to, she couldn't.

(Because she wasn't there for him when he needed it the most.)

The screen switched to Wei Wuxian's relieved face as he leaned over a bed, "Oh! You're awake!"

"Woah, imagine waking up to a face like *that* .." The girl sighed dreamily, holding her face in one hand.

Lan Xichen had to muffle his laughter after seeing his little brother's smirk. *Wangji, if you feel smug, you shouldn't be so obvious about it!*

"Ngh.." Jin Ling blearily blinked open his eyes, only to still at the cool breeze brushing against his chest. He abruptly sat up, and his eyes met Wei Wuxian's, who was currently holding his robes...

"WHERE'RE MY CLOTHES?! WHERE'S MY DOG?! WHERE'S MY SWORD?!"

Wei Wuxian shook the yellow robes with a carefree smile, "Ah, I was about to put them on for you."

Jiang Cheng facepalmed, "Wei Wuxian.."

Jin Ling jumped back as far as he could, his back colliding with the wall, "W-W-WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO TO ME?!"

"Nothing yet!" Wei Wuxian beamed so brightly that one would be convinced he was having the time of his life if not for the present situation, "But I'm about to do something!"

At Wei Wuxian's innocent laughter, Jin Ling felt goosebumps crawling down his spine.

The Jins were having some heavy contemplation amongst themselves. They'd known how disgusting Wei Wuxian was, so it was only natural that he showed his true self sooner or later. What did these people expect? If they thought Wei Wuxian was as innocent as he seems, they're simply gullible.

"It was only a matter of time until he showed us how disgusting he is." A Jin sneered.

"Right, this isn't much of a surprise. I heard the child he and Lan Wangji adopted is a Wen!"
(Source: Gossipy Nie disciples)

"A Wen?!"

"I doubt it's adopted.. It's probably actually Wei Wuxian's spawn!"

"Disgusting!"

What remained of Lan Wangji's self-restraint was thrown out of the window as he glared at the Jins, "Don't. You . Dare . Say that about my family."

The Jins trembled, "Not good, not good, I forgot he enslaved Hanguang-Jun."

"If you mess with him, your head would be rolling on the ground within seconds!"

"Let's insult him later."

"Right."

Wei Wuxian huffed out the rest of his laughter before speaking, "Why are you scared? It was only a joke."

He continued, "I spent so much effort digging you out of the wall! And you don't even say thank y-"

"Soon he's going to be digging your grave," Xue Yang chuckled, "Your uncle won't be too happy about you running off."

Jingyi hissed in a breath, "You got me there." He shook his head, "But you're starting to sound more and more *human*. It's kinda refreshing not hearing your nasty daydreams every second-"

Xue Yang's eyes twinkled with amusement, "Hm, we're going to need a coffin as well. I've tried burying myself alive once out of curiosity, but I got bored after a few minutes and gave up."

Jingyi deadpanned, "Forget everything I just said."

Before Wei Wuxian could finish, Jin Ling abruptly cut him out, "If not because of this, I- I- I would have killed you ten thousand times already!"

"If not for what?!" Jiang Cheng snapped, "If someone dared to violate you, you should not hesitate to do anything."

"I know, JiuJiu." Jin Ling said, dragging it out with a pout.

Wei Wuxian's eyes slowly glanced away as he recalled a certain incident at Phoenix Mountain..

Wei Wuxian carelessly shrugged his shoulders, "No thanks. Dying once is enough."

"Imagine dying twice."

"That's pretty deep."

Jin Ling glanced to the open window, only to notice the dark sky. 'It's so late already..?!"

"Oh no, oh no!" Jin Ling hurriedly covered his chest with his robes and rushed out of the door, looking like a woman who had just been deflowered after getting drunk, all the while ignoring Wei Wuxian's calls of "Why are you running away? Come back!"

"He thinks you're a creepy idiot, of course he's running away."

"What, did you expect him to just *stay*?"

"If I were him, my boot would be in your face and I'd already be at the other side of the world."

"DON'T FOLLOW ME!" Wei Wuxian held out his hand as if it would make Jin Ling come back.

'How could this be?!' Despite what Jin Ling had said, Wei Wuxian ran to the door, looking left and right to catch sight of the yellow robes his sect wore. **'How could he be like this?!"**

"You see! Wei Wuxian was just using him-"

Wei Wuxian thought back to the sight of the horrendous dark swirls on Jin Ling's leg, 'I haven't had the time to deal with the curse marks on his body yet..'

"-Oh.. Nevermind.. Forget what I just said.."

"Wei Wuxian is really kind! He tries to save people even at the risk of himself! He deserves the title of 'Cultivator' more than the "Real" ones do!"

"Agreed! Wei Wuxian is clearly the hero among heroes!"

"I only said a few things about you and you ran off somewhere!" A voice nearby chided.

"I mean, he's not wrong," Jingyi added.

Wei Wuxian stilled, hurriedly hiding behind a building, around the corner. 'It's Jiang Cheng's voice.'

"Oh no."

"Sect Leader Jiang is there."

Jiang Cheng paled. He knew what was about to happen.

Upon seeing Wei Wuxian stiffen, it was clear that he knew as well.

"Are you a young mistress?" Jiang Cheng continued to yell, "Your temper's getting worse by the day!"

Jingyi looked like his world views had just been turned upside down. He swallowed, "Sect Leader Jiang agrees with us.."

Ouyang Zizhen was busy gaping to notice the glare he earned from a certain Jin, "Even he thinks Jin Ling is a young mistress.. Perhaps he could join-"

"Before you ask, I am not joining any of your shady little groups." Jiang Cheng spoke, eyes all-knowing.

"They aren't shady, they're just- what's the word?"

"Weird?"

"Right! Weird!"

Jingyi looked extremely offended, "Excuse me, why are you calling your group weird? I prefer being called shady, to be honest. It sounds like we'd be secret spies or something."

Jin Ling shouted back, "I already came back safe and sound, didn't I? Stop nagging!"

Jiang Yanli sighed fondly, "A-Ling, A-Cheng was only worried about you."

Jin Ling flushed as he muttered a small, "I know that.."

"Safe and sound?!" Jiang Cheng berated, "You call this safe and sound?! Don't you think it's an embarrassment to wear your sect's uniform? Where's the spiritual dog your uncle gave you?!"

"Lan Wangji chased it away."

"Sorry not sorry, brother."

Wei Wuxian muffled a snicker with his hand, picturing Lan Wangji holding out his sword towards Fairy, all the while emitting a furious glare at the dog. 'The dog's already been chased to some corner by Lan Zhan!'

"Mn." Lan Wangji nodded. "Will save Wei Ying."

A girl somewhere behind Jiang Fengmian cooed, "Wangxian is the light in my life I never knew I needed."

"Woof! Woof! Woof!" Wei Wuxian tensed at the sound, a strangled cry escaping his throat.

"Is it just me or is this dog is everywhere?"

Fairy was revealed to be right beside him, furiously glaring, "Woof! Woof! Woof!"

"What happened?! Wasn't it with Lan Wangji?"

"I chased it far.." Lan Wangji lowered his head in guilt, "I did not know that it would get back so quickly."

Wei Wuxian saw his husband's solemn expression and pulled him into a half-hug, his hands still covering his ears, "Lan Zhan, my Lan Zhan, you tried you best-" He was abruptly cut out by yet another bark.

"EEEEEEEEK!" Wei Wuxian screeched, sprinting away on instinct, "NO! DON'T COME NEAR!"

Jin Zixun smirked, his head held high. He enjoyed watching the Yiling Patriarch tremble in fear. After this was over, perhaps he could take him back to Koi Tower's dungeons, torture him until he pleads, *begs* Jin Zixun to end his misery.

The arrogance he once had would crumble down all at once, just like the way he destroyed Jin Zixun's reputation and made him a laughingstock of the Jin Clan. He'd then use the 100 holes curse on Wei Wuxian, because it's simply what he deserved for all of the humiliation-

Jin Zixun's thoughts came to a pause as he noticed a particularly harsh glare staring holes into his head.

Lan Wangji was beside Wei Wuxian with a protective arm held around his waist. If hatred could kill, Jin Zixun was sure he'd have been sent to the afterlife long ago.

"Fairy!" Jin Ling spun around, immediately recognizing his spiritual dog's bark.

The dog happily snuggled up to Jin Ling, leaving Wei Wuxian sprawled out across the floor right before Jiang Cheng's feet.

"Sect Leader Jiang and a dog is the worst possible combination against Wei Wuxian."

"Agreed."

At that moment, Wei Wuxian thought the silence was too loud for comfort.

Lan Wangji seemed to deflate at the sight of his lover looking so upset.

Wei Wuxian patted down his robes, his head lowered so nobody could see his expression, and stood up to sprint away.

Before he could get far, however, a string of purple lightning trailed after him, wrapping around his leg and tripping him onto the floor.

"A-Cheng!" Jiang Yanli gasped, covering her mouth with both hands. What had become of them all? How had things come to this? If it were before, she could proudly say that A-Xian and A-Cheng were closer than blood brothers, and would defend each other whenever danger arrived.

But now, such things would be lies, for there were still wounds that had yet to heal.

If only they could go back, if only things could go back to how they were, if only she hadn't left them alone..

Jiang Cheng's eyes swirled with intensity, his emotions clashing together like tidal waves. A-Jie was disappointed in him, father was (always) disappointed in him, he was disappointed in him. Why on earth had he thought to use such a fear against Wei Wuxian? Why had he taken advantage of the fact that Wei Wuxian trusted him like a confidant?

"If a dog dares to come near you, I'll chase it away!" A Younger Jiang Cheng spoke within his head.

"Yeah!" A Younger Wei Wuxian agreed, *"Instead of the Twin Jades of Gusu, we'll be the Twin Prides of Yunmeng!"*

..Why had he broken the promise they made many years ago?

Wei Wuxian fell with a thud, tensing at the sight of Jiang Cheng's glare.

In all his glory, the Sect Leader stared down at the abomination before him, Zidian in hand, "Wei Wuxian."

Within the room was a chorus of, "Ooooh shit."

"Welp, he's dead."

"I'll light some incense in advance, Wei Wuxian."

Li Daiyu spoke in a serious tone, "It's about. to go. down."

The screen switched to a worried Jin Ling pacing in circles outside a room, his head glancing back to the door every few seconds as if it would ease his worry.

"I see he's grown fond of Shixiong now.." A Jiang disciple said, nodding at their own statement.

Jiang Fengmian didn't hold back his smile.

Inside of the room sat fairy, obediently to one side as Jiang Wanyin poured himself some wine and got seated.

"Can somebody tell me why that dog is there with them?"

"I hope it isn't for the reason I'm thinking of.."

"I pray that I don't have to whip someone today."

".Scary."

On the chair beside him was the trembling mess called Wei Wuxian, the nerve-wracking situation so terrifying to him that you could see his body shake.

"Wei Ying!" Lan Wangji went impossibly paler. Wei Ying never told him what happened while he was gone, but to think he was treated in such a way..

It was infuriating.

Upon seeing Wei Wuxian's unsteadiness, Jiang Cheng's eyebrow twitched in anger. He threw his cup to the floor and watched as Wei Wuxian flinched when it smashed beside his feet.

Jiang Cheng slammed his fist onto the table, "Don't you.. Have anything to say to me!?"

Wei Wuxian shakily replied, "I don't know what to say to you."

"Yeah, I'm just gonna explain myself to you because I'm being threatened and I feel extremely terrified. Yeah, definitely." A junior disciple mocked.

Jiang Wanyin snarled, his words coated in poison, "You really never learn."

"And you haven't improved either." Wei Wuxian retorted.

Jiang Cheng clicked his tongue before aggressively slamming a hand down onto the table, "Fine! Then let's see which of us really is the one who hasn't improved."

Fairy jumped up, its barks echoing within the room.

"A-CHENG!" Jiang Yanli snapped.

Jiang Cheng flinched.

Upon seeing his reaction, she inhaled a deep breath, calming herself down, "A-Cheng... Why did you do that?"

"I.." Was his reply, "I... I didn't.. I was just angry.."

Jiang Yanli sighed, "You knew A-Xian is afraid of dogs and used it against him.. Even if you.. *didn't like him*, you shouldn't have done that."

".Sorry, A-Jie." Jiang Cheng muttered.

Jiang Yanli raised a very intimidating eyebrow, "Hm?"

".Sorry, A-Xian.." He corrected, feeling the heat rise to his cheeks.

Wei Wuxian beamed, "Jiang Cheng! You called me A-Xian!" He giggled before continuing, "Though, if you're expecting me to give you free hugs like I give shijie..

"I don't.. I don't want hugs!" Jiang Cheng's face was an impossible shade of red, "Shut up, Wei Wuxian! Who wants to hug you?"

Wei Wuxian went away from his husband and ran to Jiang Cheng, pulling him into a hug, "Well, I was gonna say you can have as many as you want."

Jiang Cheng simply huffed before returning the embrace, "I'm only doing this because you forced me to!"

Jin Ling furrowed his eyebrows, "Why is the way JiuJiu is speaking so familiar..?"

Jingyi muffled a snort, "It's because that's your own behavior, young mistress!"

"Wha.. You- SHUT UP!"

Wei Wuxian jumped up from his seat, tears in the form of pinpricks forming in his eyes, "D-DON'T COME NEAR! SAVE ME, LAN ZHAN--"

Jiang Cheng could feel the way Wei Wuxian flinched at the sound of the dog, and could also see Lan Wangji staring at him, his eyes so intense that it was almost as if they were saying 'Can I have my Wei Ying back now?'

Following his instincts, Jiang Cheng waited for the barking to stop before helping Wei Wuxian back to his husband.

"Since when have you been so close with Lan Wangji?" Jiang Wanyin snarled, watching the way Wei Wuxian fell to the floor with a small 'huh?', "Back on Buddha mountain, he went so far out of his way to protect you. It really makes me wonder why.."

"When did they get so close, you ask? Since, um.." Li Daiyu pretended to ponder, "Since the day Wei Wuxian decided to exist, and if you want a more specific answer, since the day he met Lan Wangji and accidentally seduced him."

"That's my thoughts exactly!" Nie Huaisang added with a beam, "Lan-Xiong was so obvious that I-"

Jiang Cheng sent him a look. *And you didn't think to tell me this?*

Nie Huaisang ran behind Li Daiyu, "I don't know! I don't know! I don't know anything, don't bother interrogating me!"

"No," Jiang Cheng continued, "You might not necessarily be the one Lan Wangji was protecting. Perhaps he's familiar with the body you stole instead."

Lan Wangji gaped, looking extremely offended.

"Excuse me bitch, what?" Li Daiyu said with a sassy tone, happily speaking for Lan Wangji.

Wei Wuxian gaped, anger present on his face, "Watch your language!"

"Yeah! Watch your language!" The girls, including Wen Ruohan, parroted.

"You dare say he loves someone other than Wei Wuxian.. The audacity!"

"Sect Leader Jiang! I officially un-friend you!"

Jiang Cheng scoffed, "So you think you have the face to tell me to watch my words. Do you remember? Last time, on Dafan Mountain, did you watch your language when talking to Jin Ling?"

Wei Wuxian flinched.

"NO, YOU DID NOT JUST GO THERE!" Li Daiyu was strangely feeling extremely emotional at the moment.

"Calm down," Nie Huaisang coaxed, "He didn't know that Wei-Xiong didn't know."

He earned himself various looks.

"I don't know!"

"You had no mother to teach you manners." Jiang Wanyin reminded, "You really know where it hurts the most, don't you?"

Jiang Yanli saw the way her son deflated and gently patted his head, "Well he has one now, does he not?"

Jin Ling's eyes sparkled as he happily nodded with a wide smile.

He pointed a finger at Wei Wuxian, "It is all your fault that Jin Ling is made fun of like he is now." Another flinch. "Don't you forget how his parents died!"

Jin Zixuan's lips thinned into a line.

Madam Yu clenched her fists, fighting back the many insults she wished to say to Wei Wuxian.

"I didn't forget!" Wei Wuxian weakly protested, "I just-

"-didn't know.." Jiang Cheng finished, "Sorry for acting like that..."

Wei Wuxian smiled, "It's fine A-Cheng, I understand why you were angry at me.."

This time, however, Jiang Cheng didn't correct the 'A-Cheng'.

"You just what?!" Jiang Wanyin mocked, "Don't know how to say it? That's fine. You can go back to Lotus Pier, kneel before my parents' spirits, and take your time!"

Jiang Fengmian looked conflicted, "A-Cheng, what do you mean? Our deaths have nothing to do with A-Xian.."

Jiang Cheng bit his lip, "I know, but.."

Jiang Yanli gently patted him on the shoulder, "It's alright, A-Cheng. You know what you did wrong now, don't you? You can make it up to A-Xian by doing things in the future."

"Uncle! Uncle!" Jin Ling called, banging his fists onto the door, "I have something really important to tell you! I need to tell you now!"

Jiang Wanyin roughly pulled the door open, "Say it and get lost!"

"...Rude."

"To be fair, he's busy scaring the shit out of Wei Wuxian to care whether he was being rude or not."

Jin Ling nodded, "I ran into something really difficult to deal with today. I think it was Wen Ning!"

"What?!" A junior disciple gasped, "You're telling him where the Ghost General is?! Weren't you just worried about Wei Wuxian a second ago?"

"Or was that just an act?"

"No, you idiots. Figure it out yourselves."

Jiang Cheng startled, "When? Where?!"

"Just this afternoon!" Jin Ling could feel the sweat slide down his face, "There's a shack about a dozen miles south of here. I only went because I heard something strange was happening there, but instead a fierce corpse was hidden inside!"

".What? But wasn't Jin Ling with Wei Wuxian the whole time? When did he have the chance to go a dozen miles south...?"

Li Daiyu rubbed the bridge of her nose, "Oh my god, I swear you idiots are driving me insane."

"...!" Jiang Cheng glared, "Why didn't you say it sooner?!"

"I wasn't sure either," Jin Ling placed a hand to his chin in deep thought, "The corpse moved extremely fast. He ran away as soon as I went in... But I heard chains on him.."

"Now that I think of it.. Where *did* the Ghost General go?"

"You're right, we haven't seen him since Wei Wuxian summoned him ten years ago."

"Ten years?"

"When he fought the Goddess Statue, ten years ago, same thing."

"Right.."

"Perhaps he went to the Burial Mounds? Wasn't that Wei Wuxian's home or something?"

"That's possible, but why don't we ask the man himself?"

"Oh, that's smart!"

"Hey Ghost General, where were you at this time?!"

"Oh wait, he's hiding behind that Wen healer... I think he's speaking but I can't hear him."

"I can't either."

"I don't know.." Wen Ning muttered.

"What? Did Sect Leader Nie speak?"

"No, i'm pretty sure the Ghost General said that."

"How could he not know? I heard Wei Wuxian gave him a consciousness."

"I don't know. Don't ask me."

"..."

"..."

'Jin Ling's pretty smart,' Wei Wuxian mused, staring in honest surprise, 'He knew Jiang Cheng loathed Wen Ning the most, so he lied with the previous knowledge he had. He really is pretty smooth.'

Jin Ling practically shone under the praise, "Uncle Wei..."

"Wei Wuxian is right, that was quite smart."

"He's a quick thinker, to be able to create that entire scenario on the spot like that."

Jin Ling flushed red, embarrassed by everyone's compliments.

Jiang Yanli cooed, "Ah, my little A-Ling is adorable, isn't he?"

Jin Zixuan smiled, "He takes after you, so of course he is."

Jiang Yanli flushed.

After a few moments, Jin Zixuan seemed to realize what he had said and turned bright red,
"...Uh- I mean-"

Jiang Cheng choked.

Madam Jin and Madam Yu shared a glance.

"Wait, wait, wait." Someone spoke up, "Sorry to ruin the moment, but didn't Wei Wuxian just say- *think* that Jin Ling was lying!? So.. he's just helping Wei Wuxian escape?!"

"How did I not notice?! We just said that Jin Ling was lying! We're such idiots!"

"Indeed you are." Li Daiyu replied.

Jiang Cheng clicked his tongue, his gaze drifting back to Wei Wuxian, "You really bring your obedient dog wherever you go, don't you?!"

Wei Wuxian startled, '*I forgot to collaborate with his performance!*'

"They're really getting into it.."

"They really are.."

Wei Wuxian regained his demeanor, getting into the act, "He's been a dead man since long ago. I've already died once too. Just what else do you want?"

"Wei Wuxian really isn't at fault here. What does Sect Leader Jiang want? Dying for thirteen years still isn't enough?"

"What I want?!" Jiang Cheng yelled, "My hatred would persist even if he dies thousands of times!"

Jiang Cheng weakly raised a hand, "I now understand that my hatred was misplaced." He spoke, "I apologize."

Wen Ning nodded, "...It's o-kay.."

"Back then, he didn't perish very well!" He continued, walking closer to Wei Wuxian, "I'll destroy him with my own two hands! I'm going to burn him right now, and scatter his ashes right in front of your face!"

Wen Ning's pale face went impossibly paler. He recalled the way JieJie died, how they burnt her body, scattered her ashes-

"A-Ning!" Wen Qing grabbed both of his cheeks and squished them with her hands.

Wen Ning blinked, now brought back to reality, "..J-JieJie, sorry."

Jiang Cheng turned to Jin Ling, pointing a finger at Wei Wuxian from behind, "Keep a close eye on him. Don't believe or listen to anything he says! Don't let him make a sound. If he dares to whistle or play his flute, block his mouth first. If it doesn't work, cut off his tongue! If I return to see that he disappeared, I'll break your legs!"

"One, why would you cut off his tongue? He won't be able to use his handsome voice anymore."

"Ahem!"

"-Right, where was I? Two, why are you going to break your nephew's legs? Isn't that just young mistress abuse? Rude."

"It's an empty threat." Ouyang Zizhen said, "He just says it to scare the young mistress. Though, it doesn't really scare him anymore."

"Oh."

Jin Ling appeared to be slightly panicked as he replied, "Yes uncle!"

Ouyang Zizhen spoke, "He's smart but terrible at acting."

Jingyi sighed, "I've gotta agree with you on that one."

"W-Well you try tricking your terrifying uncle and saving the Yiling Patriarch because It's Not. Easy!!" Jin Ling huffed.

"I'll deal with you later!" Jiang Cheng spat, slamming the door shut behind him as he left.

"He's got quite the temper, doesn't he?"

"It reminds me of a certain young mistress..."

Wei Wuxian watched from the corner of his eye as Jin Ling instructed the guards, "You go over there. You, go guard the side. You guys stand at the main entrance. I'll go inside

and meet him."

"It's kind of cute how he's doing the whole 'hero' act. I respect."

He then opened the door a fraction and held a finger to his mouth in a shushing motion, "Let's go."

"Cute."

"Really cute."

"Stupidly cute."

Jin Ling grabbed Wei Wuxian by the hand and sprinted out of the building, deep into the woods.

Just as they were catching their breath, Wei Wuxian jumped at the familiar bark of fairy and dashed away, "AHHH! WHY IS IT HERE AS WELL?! MAKE IT GO AWAY!!!"

Jin Ling facepalmed.

When Wei Wuxian finally calmed down, and Fairy was far away, Jin Ling deadpanned, "You're such a loser. Fairy never bites anyone. It only bites dark creatures. You think he's a normal dog?"

Jin Ling's frown deepened, "Sorry for being so disrespectful, Uncle Wei."

Even as Wei Wuxian covered his face with both of his hands, he replied, "It.. It's fine, I forgive you. I must have been really annoying.."

"Hold on." Wei Wuxian blinked, "What did you just call it?"

"Fairy." Jin Ling replied, crossing his arms, "It's name."

Wei Wuxian was rendered speechless.

The crowd was rendered speechless, with a confused Jin Ling and annoyed Jiang Cheng as the exceptions.

After a moment, he asked, "You gave such a name to your dog?!"

"What's wrong with his this name?!" Jin Ling huffed, both hands on his hips, "I called him Little Fairy when he was young. Of course I can't keep on calling him that now that he's older."

"That's...Not the point..."

'He probably learned his way of naming things from Jiang Cheng..' Wei Wuxian thought.

Jiang Yanli bit her lip to stop smiling. She couldn't find it in herself to disagree.

In the past, Jiang Cheng also had a few puppies. The names he chose were things like 'Jasmine', 'Princess', 'Love', and so on, which sounded like the names of expensive girls in brothels.

Jiang Cheng earned himself many looks, "What? They are perfectly fine names!"

"Sect Leader Jiang, you.."

"Uh.."

"Okay!" Jin Ling waved a dismissive hand, "Now that you've offended my uncle, you're already half dead. I'm letting you go now, so we're even."

"Half dead?" Xue Yang began, "The coffin is still available-"

He was sent a look by Jingyi.

Jin Ling turned away as he added, "From now on, conduct yourself well!"

"Lan much?" A junior disciple commented.

Wei Wuxian continued to stand dumbly.

"What are you still doing standing there? Waiting for my uncle to come and get you?" Jin Ling huffed, "Let me tell you--Don't think I'll be grateful just because you saved me. Don't expect me to say something cringey either."

"This young Jin is so cute. I just want to scoop him into my arms!"

If Jin Zixuan was giving everyone smug smirks, well, no one felt entitled to stop him.

"Young Man," Wei Wuxian smiled, "In this life, there are two cringey things you have to say no matter what."

Jin Ling asked, "Which two?"

Wei Wuxian answered, "Thank you and I'm sorry."

Wen Qing flinched, her hands clenched into fists. Those were the words she had said to Wei Wuxian, were they not?

Wen Ning glanced worriedly to Wei Wuxian, who was busy having a moment with Lan Wangji. Their hands were connected, and the Lan was muttering something. A touching moment, if not for the somber atmosphere.

Jin Ling crossed his arms with a sneer, "What can anybody do to me if I don't say them?"

"Typical Jin." Someone commented.

Wei Wuxian clenched his fists, "Someday, you'll say those words in tears." He then raised his head, "...I'm sorry."

"...What?"

Jin Ling blinked. "What?"

"On Buddha Mountain," Wei Wuxian continued, "The words I said to you--I'm sorry I said those things."

Jiang Yanli's bottom lip wobbled, "A-Xian, it wasn't your fault.."

"He's apologizing?!"

"Why?! He didn't even mean to say that!"

"But it still hurt Jin Ling, did it not? He should be apologizing.."

"He is! So stop complaining!"

"Calm down, woman."

Jin Ling flushed, clearly embarrassed, "It- It's nothing. You're not the first person to say so either."

Jiang Yanli shook her head, "A-Ling, you have a mother now, remember?"

Jin Zixuan nodded, "You have me too, son."

Jin Ling smiled, "Mn, thanks A-Niang, A-Die."

"It's true that I had no mother to teach me. But, I won't be any worse than anyone because of this!"

"Fighting!"

"Fighting!" Various people echoed.

Wei Wuxian smiled fondly before his eyes widened and he gasped, "Ah!"

"What happened?"

"Is he gonna die?!"

"Did he get hurt?"

He pointed a finger into the distance, "Jiang Cheng?!"

"What? I don't see Sect Leader Jiang-"

Jin Ling spun around, "You-"

Before he had any chance to react, Wei Wuxian chopped him at the back of the neck with the side of his palm, cleanly knocking him out.

The Jins rubbed their hands, preparing for more insults.

"Of course, the playful act was only a pretense!"

"We will now see his true nature!"

"He's planning to do vile things to his nephew again! Last time it didn't work because the young man woke up, but who knows what Wei Wuxian will do now!?"

"Shut up, narrating is my job. And that is not what's happening."

Jin Ling rubbed between his brows, irritated, "Why are you old generation of the Jin Sect so annoying? I'm definitely not going to let you come back to Koi Tower with us. You guys can start your own Sect."

"What?!"

"This child is the Sect Leader?!"

"Impossible!"

"He's too immature! We can't have him as Sect Leader!"

"Oh yeah?" Jin Ling sneered, "Wanna bet?"

Wei Wuxian sent them a glare, informing the group that he was on Jin Ling's side.

"..Uh, my pants feel a bit wet."

"Mine too, I think I need.. the chamber pot."

"Is there one here..? Or..."

"I'm being glared at a lot today.."

Wei Wuxian gently held Jin Ling by the chest and lowered him to the floor. He then pulled up the younger's trouser leg, examining the dark markings on his skin. '*I have to think of a way to remove the curse mark.*'

"Oh."

The Jins glanced among themselves, looking like a crowd of clueless chickens.

Li Daiyu 'hmph'ed, "Serves them right!"

His eyes dropped sadly, a tint of guilt swirling within, '*I can't remove this curse mark, but..*'

"But what?"

"How will he get rid of it?!"

Lan Qiren narrowed his eyes, "Impossible.."

He clenched his fist at his side, 'I can transfer it to my own body.'

"What did I say?" Li Daiyu spoke, hands trembling, "He's a self-sacrificing idiot."

"I have to agree with you on that one." Jiang Cheng huffed, sending a glare to Wei Wuxian.

"That must be a joke, right? Nobody is that selfless!"

"Nobody is that selfless," Jiang Cheng said in a mocking tone, "Well, Wei Wuxian is. Get used to it."

"But he's the Yiling Patriarch, and this is a resentful ghost mark. He's probably already found a way to get rid of it after transferring it to his body."

"That explains everything! You're so smart!"

"I was worried for nothing!"

Not long after, there were calls of "Young Master Jin" by the many Jin disciples within the forest.

"He's here! Young Master Jin has passed out!"

"Take him back!"

"Be careful!"

Wei Wuxian silently watched from behind a tree before turning away, 'When I ran into dogs in the past, Jiang Cheng had always been the one who helped me chase them away before he laughed at me however he wanted to.'

"He looks fine! He must have gotten rid of it!"

"I was getting worried there."

"Same here."

"Thank god.

If Jiang Cheng heaved a sigh of relief, nobody commented.

'I always thought Jiang Cheng would stand on my side,' He absentmindedly thought, 'And Lan Wangji on the opposite to mine.'

Lan Wangji went rigid.

'Who would have known,' Wei Wuxian finally reached the place he and Lan Wangji had agreed to meet, *'That reality is the complete opposite.'*

Jiang Cheng went silent.

"Um, so, that gave me a lot of feels."

"Same bro."

"But he's about to meet with Lan Wangji again! I'm so excited!"

"More wangxian moments means more happiness for me. It's a win/win situation."

"We've already clarified that Wei Wuxian is a self-sacrificing idiot, so he's probably going to do something stupid in the future."

Jiang Cheng rolled his eyes, "How'd you know?"

"Wow, that was just a guess, but thanks for confirming."

"At the start, I thought this would be all fluffy and I'd end up cooing at every single thing, but it's become a mystery now."

"Right, I have a weak heart. I don't think I'll be able to handle this."

"Shut up, you're a cultivator."

“Right, I forgot.”

Chapter End Notes

[1] Yama - King of Hell (I didn't know whether they used the term 'hell' so I just used Yama lol)

We got some emotional constipation 'ere, kiddos

(This chapter is heavily inspired by that Xue Yang mermaid meme)

At the start, I made Xue Yang act like Bingge (ቤግግ) I'm sorry I've been reading too much SVSSS

Right, since you guys enjoyed OOC fanboy Wen Ruohan, I decided Xue Yang is gonna be Jingyi's buddy who is making dead jokes all the time
He was quite a hard character to write. I think he's (kind of?) OOC but I hope you like the way I portrayed him.

And! The! Start! I honestly don't know what happened. That flashback makes me cringe
lol sorry

With all their fanfare, they came to throw a siege, yet they themselves were instead faced with a siege. They chanted that they were here to destroy evil, yet in the end they needed the 'evil' to save their own lives.

Literally my favourite MDZS quote. Wen Qing had to say it.

Sorry if this chapter was weird, I don't know what happened to my English. I wrote things like 'conformed' instead of 'confirmed' lmao

Xue Yang: says name

Xiao Xingchen: says name back

Song Lan: *glares* also says name

Wei Wuxian: hold my emperor's smile

Next Chapter: We meet Nie-Xiong!! ↴(¬¬¬)↓

A cacophony of lies II - Present

Chapter Summary

Wei Wuxian, Lan Wangji, and Nie Huaisang have a chat.

Chapter Notes

A new chapter is out, yay.

Sorry for the long wait. I've been suffering from writer's block and my teachers have been spamming my emails with homework-

This chapter is really scrappy, and I apologize for that. I was half asleep most of the time lmao

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Within his peripheral vision, Wei Wuxian spotted a familiar set of white robes.

He immediately recognized the figure as Lan Wangji, and took a step forward, preparing to rush up to the man.

"Run, Wei Wuxian! Run as fast as your legs will take you! Run into his arms!"

"After hours of separation, they have finally reunited! What will happen next?!"

Before he could move, Lan Wangji's head immediately spun around to face him with a god-like speed, his eyes glassy and bloodshot, the rims red and sore.

"Wangji.." Lan Xichen muttered, unable to look away from the scene.

Lan Qiren was obviously shocked as well, his eyes flitting between Lan Wangji and the screen.

After years of living with his husband, Wei Wuxian could read him like an open book.

Lan Zhan had cried.

And Wei Wuxian had a faint idea why.

After a moment, he slowly encased both of his husband's hands in his own, "Lan Zhan."

Lan Wangji looked away.

Wei Wuxian cupped his cheek, turning his head so he faced him, "Lan Zhan, my precious Lan Zhan."

Lan Wangji leaned into the hand, letting his cheek rub against the warm skin as he let out a soft "Mn."

"I was going to come back for you," Wei Wuxian gently pressed their foreheads together, "I'll always come back for you.."

Lan Wangji smiled, "Will always wait for Wei Ying."

Wei Wuxian tensed and hesitantly took a step backward, 'I'm feeling a bit scared for some reason..'

"..He has a point," A woman commented, "Lan Wangji *does* look quite scary there,"

"I second that."

"Perhaps he should run in the other direction until Lan Wangji calms down."

"He's probably just sad that Wei Wuxian took so long."

"Mh,"

Due to the previous skip in his step, Wei Wuxian hadn't realized his foot had twisted into an awkward angle until his body swayed and he tumbled forwards with a yell, "Ah!"

"A-Xian!" Jiang Yanli called on instinct, reaching out a hand as if she could catch him.

"A-Xian!" Jin Zixuan also called, once again forgetting the form of address used.

Lan Wangji's usually-stoic face expressed clear worry; his eyes were wide and his lips parted with a gasp.

A horrified shriek resounded within the room.

"Catch him!" The girls chanted.

Wei Wuxian was caught in stable arms and messily fumbled around to regulate his composure.

Sighs of relief echoed throughout the crowd.

"Lan Zhan, I never thanked you," Both of his arms locked around one of Lan Wangji's, Wei Wuxian smiled up at his husband, who happily smiled back.

"There is no need for thank you's between us," Lan Wangji replied, pressing a light kiss to Wei Wuxian's forehead.

"Lan Zhan, is this about what I said?" There was a hint of melancholy in Wei Wuxian's tone.

After a moment, Lan Wangji knelt down and rolled up Wei Wuxian's trouser leg, "D-D-Don't! H-Hanguang-Jun, you don't have to do this!"

"Uh,"

"Is he looking for the curse mark? Jin Ling had it on his leg as well before Wei Wuxian transferred it."

"Probably.."

At the sight of the dark curse mark covering most of his leg, Wei Wuxian timidly scratched his cheek, determinedly avoiding eye contact with Lan Wangji.

Lan Wangji's eyebrow twitched, "I was only gone for a few hours.."

Lan Xichen loudly snorted, earning himself a look from his uncle.

Lan Qiren made an unintelligible sound of distress.

"A few hours is a long time. Anything can happen." Wei Wuxian gently took hold of Lan Wangji's hand and helped him to his feet, "There, there. Stand up.."

Jiang Cheng was busy making sounds akin to a dying fish, "Wow. Just wow."

"Wow what?" Wei Wuxian asked with a slight pout.

"Since when have you been 'calm' and 'gentle'?" Jiang Cheng crossed his arms, "If I knew setting you with the Lans would have this effect, I would have given you to them long before!"

Wei Wuxian grinned at Lan Wangji, "Lan Zhan, did you hear that? Jiang Cheng is happy to give me to you!"

"FORGET I SAID ANYTHING," Jiang Cheng inhaled a sharp breath, suddenly recalling Wei Wuxian's episodes after getting married.

"It's only the average curse mark. I'll just kill it when it comes to find me," Wei Wuxian continued, waving a dismissive hand.

"Oh, I guess he forgot he resurrected."

"Kinda hard to forget something like that, not gonna lie."

"Funny, I heard Mo Xuanyu's core is super weak."

"Guys, he's probably talking about using demonic cultivation."

The atmosphere (on one half of the room) darkened instantly.

"Demonic cultivation?"

"How vile! He should just keep the curse and let it eat him alive!"

"I agree with you one hundred percent! It's simply karma!"

On the other side of the room, girls, however, were in a frenzy.

"Oh my god, is he gonna use DC?"

"Wei Wuxian meddling with Resentful energy is like the hottest thing *ever*."

"DC and Wei Wuxian are the *best* pairing. ...Excluding Wangxian, of course!"

".Imagine cheating on your husband with dark energy."

"Mad," Li Daiyu added.

"If only I married someone like *that* .."

The girls sighed dreamily.

Lan Jingyi commented, "You referring to the resentful energy, or..."

"Right," Wei Wuxian's expression folded into something more serious, "Now let's deal with the stone castles first. Hanguang-Jun, you have to help me. I won't be able to handle it myself. Have you found the person? Is it him? Where is he?"

"Who is it anyway?"

"Someone spoil it! I can't wait anymore!"

"Wei Ying."

Wei Wuxian froze.

Li Daiyu's face became that of white, green, then red before she jumped up, squealing, "HE KNOWS!! THE JIG IS UP! LAN WANGJI KNOWS!!"

"Lan Wangji just said 'Wei Ying'.. I'm not hallucinating, am I?" Li Daiyu's best friend murmured.

"You aren't.." Wen Ruohan clasped his mouth with a hand, "..Sorry, just give me a second."

Nie Huaisang stared at the broad back and shaking shoulders with suspicion.

When Wen Ruohan next turned around, Nie Huaisang grimaced at the red-rimmed eyes and suspiciously wet irises, "..."

"Wow," Jiang Cheng sarcastically smiled, "He knows it's Wei Wuxian, what a surprise."

"Jiang Cheng," Wei Wuxian pouted, "At least *pretend* to be surprised."

Jiang Wanyin rolled his eyes, "I'm sorry, but it was horrifying watching you two in Gusu. You were following Lan Wangji around like a little duckling, whereas he was just awkwardly cold all the time--"

"Emotionally constipated." Wen Ruohan corrected.

"Right, emotionally constipated. Now, after you.. *resurrected*, it just got worse. You two seemed to never know how to GET A ROOM!"

"I think Jiang Cheng is the emotionally constipated one," Wei Wuxian said (gossiped) to Lan Wangji in a whisper.

"Mn," Lan Wangji agreed.

"I think he's tired of being single," Wei Wuxian tutted, "Why can't he just get himself a wife?"

"Can't," Lan Wangji answered.

"Why?"

"..." Lan Wangji didn't answer either out of sympathy or because it was against his clan's rules.

Frustration could be seen on Lan Wangji's face, "Was it transferred from Jin Ling's body? You met Jiang Wanyin."

Wei Wuxian sighed, beginning to walk away, "As long as the two of us are still alive in this world, we'd meet each other sooner or later."

"Can someone remind me why this man is evil again?"

"Stop walking." Lan Wangji commanded.

"Yeah! Come back here right now, Wei Wuxian!"

Wei Wuxian chuckled, cracking a joke to liven the atmosphere, "Will you carry me on your back if I don't walk?"

"Oh," Various people exchanged glances.

Lan Wangji stared.

"It seems," A young woman spoke, "That Lan Wangji.. Has the same thoughts as us,"

Wei Wuxian's smile froze on his face, '*I feel a foreboding sensation.*'

"That you should!"

Lan Wangji crouched down, his back facing Wei Wuxian.

"Bro! Bro!" Li Daiyu began to slap Nie Huaisang on the arm in a frantic manner, "Hey, are you seeing this bro?"

Nie Huaisang nodded, "Yeah. I got eyes, bro."

"Stop! Stop!" Wei Wuxian shrieked, "I wasn't being serious! It's only numb because I got hit by Zidian a few times, not that it broke!"

Jiang Cheng's mood drastically dropped at the mention of their previous encounter.

"You have carried me on your back as well." Lan Wangji stated as if it made sense.

"WHAT?!" Wen Ruohan screeched.

"Why haven't I heard of this?!" Li Daiyu pointed an accusing finger to Wei Wuxian, "You!"

Wei Wuxian jumped, "Ai- What?"

"Why didn't I know?!" She demanded.

He lightly shrugged, "I didn't know either until Lan Zhan told me."

Wei Wuxian scratched his head, "Did such a thing happen? Why don't I remember?"

Lan Wangji spoke, "You never remember such things."

Jiang Cheng somehow clapped sarcastically, "Wow, this is all news to me."

Wei Wuxian pouted.

"You all say I've got a bad memory. Fine, bad memory it is then," Wei Wuxian huffed, "Anyways, no."

Lan Wangji answered, in which Wei Wuxian heaved a sigh of relief, "Fine, I will not."

"Lan Wangji, that's wrong! Whether he wants it or not, you're supposed to scoop him into your arms and-"

"Huh?" After a moment, Wei Wuxian felt two strong arms curl under both his torso and legs as he was held against a warm chest. "Lan Zhan!"

"-Aight, forget everything I just said. Lan Wangji is such a legend."

Girls, or rather, every girl present, screamed.

Wen Ruohan squealed so loudly that he began to cough, which soon turned into harsh chokes.

Wen Qing rolled her eyes as she slapped him on the back, "Can't you calm down for even one second of your life?"

"You told me not to carry you on my back," Lan Wangji reasoned, beginning to walk forwards.

Middle-aged cultivators, who were clearly far away from Wei Wuxian and Lan Wangji, gaped.

"I've never seen Hanguang-Jun act so.."

"Shameless.."

"This is a surprise.."

Meanwhile, Lan Qiren sighed into a palm, "I don't know why I even try anymore.."

Wei Wuxian shrieked, "Well I didn't tell you to carry me like this either!"

His hand found its way to Lan Wangji's chest, "You wanna see whose face Is thicker, eh?"

"Oh my god, just get married already!"

"..." No one decided to comment.

"Lan Zhan, have you known it was me ever since Buddha Mountain?"

"Mn."

"How did you recognize me?"

"You told me yourself."

"What? Did I miss something?"

"No, I'm pretty sure he's talking about how Wei Wuxian summoned Wen Ning, the ghost general."

"Myself?" Wei Wuxian questioned, unaware of the fact that they had just entered an inn, "Is it because I summoned Wen Ning? Because of Jin Ling? It's not either of those, is it?"

"Huh? Is it not?"

"Then how..?"

The innkeeper's smile folded into something more strained as he watched the two awkwardly, "The busy day has finally ended.."

"Wangxian likes making you remember you're single. I feel you, bro."

Lan Wangji began to carry him up the flight of stairs, "Think by yourself."

Wei Wuxian whined, "I'm only asking you because I can't think of anything."

"Why won't Lan Wangji just tell him?"

Xue Yang chuckled, "Mo Xuanyu's face looks like Wei Wuxian's. It's a dead giveaway."

Jingyi stared at Xue Yang, "Was that intentional-"

A girl hurriedly spoke, "Not as handsome, may I add."

"We get it, you're crushing on him. Now, what were you saying?"

"Surely Lan Wangji would know if it was the man he'd been pining for years, regardless of his face."

"Wei Wuxian pretended to be a lunatic as Mo Xuanyu, so unless Lan Wangji knew it was an act..."

"Dude, I think the whole 'I'm Mo Xuanyu the lunatic' thing has long since passed."

"Right, Wei Wuxian isn't even trying to hide it anymore."

"You think a lunatic can investigate this mystery, when even an idiot such as Jingyi can't?"

A certain Lan glared, "Zizhen! I'm not an idiot!"

Xue Yang snorted, "Kids are so temperamental in this generation."

A girl snapped her head up from where it had dropped in thought, "Lan Wangji somehow recognized Wei Wuxian even when he was in another body. So.. If Wei Wuxian became a duck, surely he'd notice!"

The room was rendered silent.

"...I don't think ducks can communicate, my dear."

"Right, while that is a sweet thought, perhaps you need to.. liven down a bit."

"Okay, we're here," Lan Wangji stopped in front of one of the rooms in the inn, Wei Wuxian still in his arms.

Jin Guangyao inched closer in interest. This was his chance to see how Nie Huaisang's plan was put into action.

Su She saw what he was doing and began the same.

"Calm down, people. Calm down. There's enough room for everyone!" A middle-aged man chided.

"50 on Jin Guangyao!"

"60 on Su She!"

"80!"

"100!"

"250 on Nie Huaisang!"

"You idiot! Sect Leader Nie can't do anything! Why would he have organized this?!"

Wei Wuxian paused, "Lan Zhan, what are they doing?"

After a moment of silence, Lan Wangji replied, "..Betting."

"On what?"

"Who it is inside the room."

Wei Wuxian laughed, "It was quite simple to figure out, but I guess I'll let them have their fun."

"Mn."

Wei Wuxian weakly chuckled, "It's time for you to put me down already, isn't it? You haven't got the extra hand to open the-"

"Don't listen!"

"Keep him in your arms forever, Lan Wangji! I'm warning you, he'll run away!"

Without hesitation, Lan Wangji raised a leg and slammed the door open with his shoe.

The room was once again rendered silent. So silent that you could hear the shuffling of shoes and robes.

The Lans were making a mix of horrified and fascinated choking noises.

"My.. My nephew.." Lan Qiren's expression appeared constipated as he clutched his chest.

"You won't be having a Qi deviation any time soon, old man." Wen Qing deadpanned, "I can see your desperation to run away from the situation. Beat it."

"H-HANGUANG-JUN!-" From within the room, Nie Huaisang hysterically yelled, "**I DON'T KNOW, I-**"

"..." His wails quietened as he saw the scene before him, "...I really don't know.."

"S- Sect Leader Nie?!"

"Ha! I knew it! Where's my silver at, eh? You better hand it over, it's your loss!"

"Shut up, you old hag. You didn't just skip 13 years into the future, so you already knew!"

"Nah, I'm just a genius!"

Nie Huaisang shook his head violently, "I.. I don't know.. Don't ask me anything, I can't answer."

He visibly gulped, his body trembling, "I.."

Nie Mingjue blinked, stared, then blinked again, "...Huaisang."

"Haha, Da-Ge, what a coincidence I was there!" Nie Huaisang really wanted to cry. Where was his fan?

Lan Wangji ignored him in favor of walking to the bed and gently placing Wei Wuxian down as if he were a priceless treasure.

The girls cooed, "Awh, screw this rotten cultivation world, we need more people like this!"

"My exact thoughts! Wangxian is the only light in my world!"

"What about your husband?"

"Wangxian is a light in the darkness called the world," The woman corrected, "They need more acknowledgment."

"I need my own Lan Wangji."

"Sales are going to soar after this is over."

"Yeah, 'specially wangxian things. I'd enjoy having a painted fan of Lan Wangji and Wei Wuxian."

"I still didn't know what Wei Wuxian looked like because he was too evil," She mimicked, "Courtesy of my parents."

"Ah, I can relate bro."

Nie Huaisang flicked open his fan, feeling too awkward to speak any further.

"Hold on a second, if Nie Huaisang made this wangxian scene happen.. Then I guess I could forgive him."

Nie Huaisang sniffled. Forgive him for what?! They don't even know the worst of it!

"Yeah, but don't forget how Jin Ling was injured."

"Let's just hear what he has to say."

Lan Wangji placed down a scrap of cloth onto the table Nie Huaisang was seated at, "Speak."

"Wait, wasn't that the cloth fairy had?"

"You're right!"

"I.. I just happened to pass by," Nie Huaisang's trembles never ceased, his hands moving to grip at his robes, "...I really don't know anything."

"Guess his title makes sense," someone joked, shifting uncomfortably when no one laughed.

Wei Wuxian held a hand against his cheek, sitting comfortably on the bed, "What exactly is the QingheNie's goal of building the Man-eating castles on Xinglu Ridge? And where did the corpses in the walls come from?"

"I don't know, I really don't know!" A Yao disciple ridiculed, mimicking Nie Huaisang's wails.

A few others snickered.

Wei Wuxian continued, "Sect Leader Nie, if you don't make things clear today, perhaps in the future, even if you'd like to make things clear, nobody would buy it either."

Nie Huaisang abruptly stood up from his seat, "It- It isn't a Man-eating castle at all. It's.. It's just our Sect's ancestral Burial Ground!"

"But no bodies were there. What's he getting at?"

"Ancestral Burial Ground?" Wei Wuxian inquired, "Whose ancestral Burial Ground buries sabers instead of corpses?"

"Caught red-handed, brother."

"We, the Nie Sect, are different from the other sects." Nie Huaisang began, "Because our Sect's founder was a butcher, the other sects cultivate using swords, while our sect, on the other hand, cultivates using sabers."

"The sabers of our past Sect leaders are all heavy with hostile energy and killing intent. Almost every single Sect Leader met a sudden death from a Qi Deviation explosion. Their irritable tempers had a lot to do with this as well. I'm sure you two know. My brother, Nie Mingjue, also.."

"Ha!" Sect Leader Yao scoffed, "That sounds an awful lot like demonic cultivation to me!"

"Exactly!" Jin Zixun agreed.

Wei Wuxian thought back to the rumors with a solemn atmosphere, "What happened with Chifeng-Zun was indeed a regret."

Jin Guangyao shifted uncomfortably.

"Buried inside along with these sabers and sect leaders weren't any valuable treasures, but instead hundreds of corpses that were about to awake." Nie Huaisang spoke.

"That's a bit.."

"Uh, how is your Sect even comfortable with that?"

"Corpses?" Lan Wangji asked.

Nie Huaisang frantically waved his hands in shock, seemingly just remembering that Lan Wangji was there, "Hanguang-Jun! I can explain! These corpses weren't killed by our sect's people! We had to gather them from all around!"

Nie Huaisang nodded profusely, "That- That's right! We really didn't kill anyone-"

"Wow, so the head-shaker actually knows something for once."

If Nie Huaisang's hands were clenched into fists, well, nobody noticed.

"The saber spirits would suppress the awakening of the corpses and, at the same time, the corpses would calm the sword spirits' fury and desire. The situation would carry on, with the two sides keeping each other in check. Only because of this did the future generations attain peace!"

"Oh," Wei Wuxian tilted his head curiously, "Then why did it become the 'Man-Eating castles'? You're the one who spread this rumor as well, aren't you?"

"How'd Wei Wuxian come to that conclusion?"

Nie Huaisang audibly groaned, "You could say it did 'eat people'.. But it wasn't on purpose!!! The number of corpses put into the tombs was strictly controlled. It was neither more nor less, just enough to be at a balance with the saber spirits. If one were missing, it'd search for nearby beings on its own to fill in the gaps. "

"Wait, so like, they have a mind of their own?"

Li Daiyu gaped, "That's sick, bro!"

Jingyi paused, "In a good way, or.."

"Oh my god, Jingyi. Read between the lines for once."

A Yao disciple pointed an accusing finger at the Nies, "You think it's cool? How can you call yourselves cultivators?!"

"Excuse me, sir." Li Daiyu raised a hand, "I'm not a cultivator-"

"The Nie Sect is using demonic cultivation!" The Yao disciple continued, "Every Sect Leader has been possessed by evil ghosts! Did you not find it strange how Nie Mingjue went crazy before he died?!"

"One, you weren't even there so shut up. Two, are you sure *you're* a cultivator? Ever heard of a qi deviation?"

"You-" The Yao disciple ignored her in favor of yelling at the Nies, "Their so-called 'righteousness' is just a farce! They are actually in cahoots with the demons! I say they're just as bad as the Yiling Patriarch-"

"THAT IS ENOUGH," Nie Mingjue's yelled, eyes blazed with anger.

The Yao disciple scrambled away, deciding to hide with his sect brothers and sisters.

"That.. Young Master Jin.. Somehow made an explosion that created a hole in the wall, as well as destroyed a skeleton buried inside it.. And so he was sucked into the walls of the castle, in place of the corpse that he blew up."

Jin Zixuan inhaled a sharp breath at the memory. He held Jin Ling and Jiang Yanli closer as if promising himself that they were *there*. And that they were *alive*.

"Every so often, I go to the Xinglu Ridge to check things out. Today, when I went, I found the bone fragments. Just as I picked up a piece.." Nie Huaisang sniffled, "A dog came to bite me."

"So Sect Leader Nie was a victim too," Ouyang Zizhen whispered.

"That must have been why Fairy had the scrap of cloth."

"Wei Wuxian paled, "It was fairy.."

At the mention of his beloved dog, Jin Ling chirped, "Fairy?"

"Hanguang-Jun, and you too." Nie Huaisang wiped his tears with a hiccup, "I already said everything. Please don't tell anyone else about this!"

'If he weren't a Sect Leader and spent his whole life the same way as he did back in Cloud Recess, fooling around each day, he'd be in a much more comfortable position than he is now. But since his brother had passed away already, no matter how hard it is for him, he'll still have to take the responsibility on his shoulders and stumble forward.'

Touched, Nie Huaisang's eyes watered, "Wei-Xiong.. You really are my best friend."

Though, there were still times when he missed, times when he yearned for his youth once again. Back then, things were perfect. He could joke around and do whatever he wanted, without the restrictions present when being a Sect Leader.

"Oh, and Huaisang," Nie Mingjue spoke, "Don't think that because I'm back, your Sect duties will be gone."

"Wha- Da-Ge!!"

"Boo-hoo," Nie Huaisang sniffled as he left the room.

Wei Wuxian turned his neck, only to see Lan Wangji standing before him.

"Stop, that actually scared me."

Lan Wangji kneeled down once again and pulled up Wei Wuxian's trouser leg, "Wait, wait, Lan Zhan! Again?!"

Wen Ruohan sniffled, "The underlying devotion has me in tears." He wiped his eyes, "See, there are real tears. I'm crying."

Li Daiyu chuckled, "I swear I only ever hear your input when there's a wangxian scene."

"Of course," Wen Ruohan smirked, "I'm too busy focusing on a way to take over the cultivation world again."

Li Daiyu snorted, appreciating the small joke.

The rest of the room, well, went as pale as Wen Ning.

A young disciple weakly raised a hand, "Um, so, is there gonna be a second sunshot campaign?"

Lan Wangji closed his eyes and sighed, "We will remove the curse mark first."

"I- I'll do it myself!" Wei Wuxian blurted, rolling his trouser leg up past his knee.

"I-"

"You-"

"Wei Wuxian..."

"Oh," he blinked, "It's already passed my thighs."

"Hmmmmmm," Li Daiyu held her face in a palm as she narrowed her eyes.

"You okay there?" Her best friend questioned.

" 'M Fine."

Lan Wangji's ears flushed an alarming shade of red and he quickly turned his head to the side.

"Cute!" The girls squealed.

"Adorable!" Lan Xichen squealed, earning himself numerous stares. His little brother was cute, so what? Are they jealous?

Wei Wuxian's expression darkened. Lan Zhan's cute side was reserved for him and him only! If other people saw Lan Zhan like this, they'd fall in love! And he doesn't want that!

(Wei Wuxian silently devised a plan to kick them out of Cloud Recess when they came running).

"Lan Zhan?" Wei Wuxian asked.

Lan Wangji's blush had spread to his cheeks, and Wei Wuxian watched with a mischievous smile, 'The way Lan Zhan looks right now.. Makes me want to tease him!'

Li Daiyu huffed a laugh, "Wei Wuxian's definition of teasing seems to be 'pester' and 'annoy', but that's what Lan Wangji likes, so I give my full approval."

"Wow," A girl spoke.

"Wow," Li Daiyu replied with a smile.

Jiang Fengmian watched the couple with a laugh.

He'd never really thought of Wei Wuxian as a son, but had instead felt obliged to protect him. Failing A-Xian would be like failing Cangse and Changze, "I'm glad he's happy."

Madam Yu's scowl seemed to deepen.

Suddenly, the teapot previously used crashed to the floor, followed by Lan Wangji's Qiankun pouch. It began to shake violently as if seeking a way of escape.

'The Qiankun pouch that sealed the Ghoul hand suddenly became agitated!'

"It seems the hand is our culprit for ruining the wangxian moment this time."

"Right, when we find out who it is, they're in for a beating."

..Their body and soul got cut into pieces, cut them some slack.." Nie Huaisang squeaked. He didn't want his Da-Ge turning into mincemeat the moment they leave, thank you very much.

Wei Wuxian narrowed his eyes, "These days, it's never looked as impatient as today. it seems like it's been stimulated by something."

"Imagine the hand was a wangxian fan," a girl chuckled, "And it was stimulated by the cute wangxian moment!"

"That'd be funny," another added.

"Ah, I wanna see that."

"That's so unrealistically weird but I totally agree."

"And," Lan Wangji reasoned, "It was something on you."

"The curse mark is the only thing on me that's different," Wei Wuxian stroked his chin as he spoke, "Oh! It was left on Jin Ling when he was at the stone castles of the Xinglu Ridge! That means.."

"Within the walls of the Nie Sect's saber hall, there might be another part of its body." Lan Wangji finished.

"Woah, that was quite quick. We're gonna finish this investigation soon, right?"

"But what if the body has decayed like the skeleton we saw?"

"Dude, did you even see the resentful arm? It's all flesh and bones."

"Oh, you're right."

"I wonder who it is.. Maybe they're here too?"

"Huaisang, how on earth did you end up revealing our sect's heavily guarded secret to the entire cultivation world..?" Nie Mingjue heaved.

"Sorry Da-Ge. My bad." Nie Huaisang didn't sound the least bit guilty.

Chapter End Notes

I edited it the best I could. Sorry if it doesn't make sense, I'm tired):

I woke up at 3am to write this -sob-

As you've probably already guessed, the girls represent the fandom. (Why didn't I mention this earlier?)

Next Chapter: Searching Corpses! Yay....

Speculation I - Present

Chapter Summary

Further investigation ft. Nie Huaisang!

Chapter Notes

Did I die? Maybe

Did I take too long to update? Yes

Am I sorry? Very

Lmao I feel so evil for making u guys wait so long-

But I figured "If I never gave them a schedule, then how can my updates be considered late?" ψ(`∇')ψ

Ok, but really, I apologize.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The two made their way back to Xinglu Ridge, accompanied by Nie Huaisang.

"There isn't! There definitely isn't!" Nie Huaisang wailed, "The corpses that our saber hall uses are all complete with each limb attached. It's impossible for there to be some armless male corpse!"

Li Daiyu frowned, "Sounds kinda sus to me."

"Sus?"

"Short for suspicious."

Nie Huaisang nervously hid his face behind a hand, "I... I don't know what you mean." The act was getting old, but what harm is once more going to do?

"Sometimes I wonder how he even became chief cultivator."

"WHAT?!" Nie Mingjue roared, sounding more shocked than happy.

Nie Huaisang paused, "What, Da-Ge? You didn't know?"

Another added, "This is the first I've heard of this!"

"That's because you were dead, you idiot."

"What about Jin Guangyao? Wasn't he chief cultivator?"

Nie Mingjue's eyes hardened at the mention of Jin Guangyao.

"Oh, he's dead."

"Neat."

"Wait, so Jin Guangyao became chief cultivator? And now Nie Huaisang? In the span of thirteen years?!"

"Plus a few extra, but yeah. Pretty much."

"Isn't Jin Guangyao the son of a prostitute? How did he become Chief Cultivator?"

"He became sworn brothers with Nie Mingjue and Lan Xichen-"

"WHAT?!" Various people yelled in unison.

"Dude, you're seriously outdated. That happened, like, right after the war."

"No, rather, have you been living under a rock?"

"Actually, I've been dead, thank you very much."

"What happened? Weren't we just talking about an armless male corpse?"

"Youngsters these days.. Their conversations go haywire."

"Did you forget that you're younger than Nie Mingjue? And that's excluding the years he was dead."

"...."

"I've dug out all of the male corpses in this wall, if you don't believe me, Hanguang-Jun, you can check for yourself!"

"Why does it have to be a male?"

"I think it's because the arm belonged to a male."

Jingyi reasoned, "It could have just been a female with muscles."

"I highly doubt that."

Wei Wuxian crouched down and poked one of the many skulls on the floor, 'Then could its owner have three arms..? Could it be that the arm didn't belong to a man? No, I can tell with a single glance whether it's a man's or woman's hand..'

"No, stop. Wei Wuxian, please don't say that. It sounds a bit..."

Wei Wuxian pursed his lips, "It sounded better in my head...Or I guess... To me.."

"Can we just talk about the fact that Wei Wuxian thought someone could have three arms?"

"Right, it's not like you see someone with three arms every day."

"Some people have 6 fingers."

"4," Xue Yang added.

Lan Wangji spoke, "The legs."

Wei Wuxian gasped in realization, 'Right, so that's why the curse mark is on my leg. It's a leg! His leg is hidden here!'

"Woah, now that I think of it, that makes a lot of sense."

"And... How does this relate to the arm?"

"I think the curse mark belonged to the same person? I don't know!!"

"Right, now you're just acting like a Nie Huaisang,"

"I *can* hear you, you know.." Nie Huaisang added with a frown.

"Right, just because someone says 'I don't know' you don't have to affiliate it with him."

Another added, "I think we've already clarified the fact that he isn't dumb."

"Those people in the back are still unaware, though. They never hear our conversations." Li Daiyu waved at the group of resurrected cultivators in the back with a smile.

Although rather confused, they waved back anyway.

"Take their pants off, take their pants off!" Wei Wuxian commanded, making Nie Huaisang freeze.

"You-" A Nie disciple exclaimed, "How shameless! How dare you suggest something such as that before the saber hall of our ancestors!"

Wei Wuxian helplessly shrugged, "Sorry, it was the only solution I could think of..."

"STOP! STOP!" Nie Huaisang wailed, as if he could make the screen stop showing what was about to happen, "Noooooooooo."

Li Daiyu watched her friend fall into the pits of despair and gently patted his back, "There, there."

"Why would you say such a shameful thing in front of Hanguang-Jun?!"

"Is it just me or is Lan Wangji being given a green hat?" [1]

"I wouldn't go as far as to say he has one since Wei Wuxian isn't really.. You know.."

"But seriously. I want to scream about the fact that he's only allowed to see Hanguang-Jun's body but find myself unable to do so. This is all too shocking."

"I feel you, bro."

"Help me take off all of the corpses' pants. This has nothing to do with the female ones-- Only the male corpses!" He added, ignoring Nie Huaisang's shrieks.

Jiang Cheng facepalmed, followed by the fangirls, who were also followed by the entire (save for one or two people) room. The sound of slapping echoed throughout the walls.

"Wei Wuxian." Jiang Cheng groaned.

"Someone remind me why he's known as the Yiling Patriarch again?"

"I swear he's so smart yet at the same time is so dumb."

"Think I'm gonna die at this rate. If one day I collapse with heart problems, you know the culprit."

"Did he forget he's in the Cutsleeve Mo Xuanyu's body or is he just oblivious about everything?"

"I think it's both."

"Hanguang-Jun, please remind me why you married this man."

"The audacity to question their marriage." A girl mumbled darkly.

"Love Wei Ying," Lan Wangji fondly patted Wei Wuxian on the head.

"I love you too, Lan Zhan." Wei Wuxian took Lan Wangji's hand and gently kissed his palm.

"This is cute but *so* out of context."

"Hanguang-Jun, stop him! Try to stop him!"

Lan Wangji grabbed Wei Wuxian's wrist, incurring a sigh of relief from Nie Huaisang,
"Phew."

"I have a foreboding feeling.."

"Do not move," Lan Wangji commanded, "I will do it."

"...."

"...."

"...."

"WHAT?!" Chu Rong yelled, her voice echoing throughout the room.

"...What?!" Li Daiyu parroted, her expression mimicking her friend's.

Chu Rong finally decided to voice her thoughts. After screaming about Wangxian and calmly revealing her parents' rocky relationship with a face straighter than Lan Wangji, her resolve had only intensified compared to before.

"Lan Wangji, you poor thing. Don't dirty your hands, let Nie Huaisang do it!" She deadpanned.

"...What?" The said sect leader mumbled, horrified.

Nie Huaisang startled, "HUH?!"

"I have a feeling that Nie Huaisang didn't plan for this to happen." Someone whispered.

"Right, he probably meant for them to find out another way.."

"Poor guy.."

In the end, Lan Wangji found a corpse. His legs and upper body didn't belong to the same person. They were sewn together. And just who was the one that buried the corpse along with the others?

"They won't be able to get anything by asking Nie Huaisang. Let's look forward to a new journey, everyone!" Someone spoke up.

Nie Huaisang internally sobbed under his brother's stare, *'For sure, after I die, I will be slapped on the face by every ancestor in the Qinghe Nie Sect and end up injured so badly that I'd be handicapped even after I reincarnate.'* [2]

Nie Mingjue was speechless. All he could mutter was a helpless, "Huaisang.."

Meanwhile, the Nie disciples were shriveling to the floor like flowers losing their vitality.

"Sect Leader..."

"How could you let them do this to us..?"

"Is this the afterlife?"

"I must have lost at least ten years of my lifespan seeing this."

"Usually, the past sect leaders chose and collected them while they were still alive.." Nie Huaisang spoke, "My brother passed away at an earlier age. He didn't have enough, so I also helped him choose some.."

Nie Mingjue slowly closed his eyes. His death left Huaisang all alone, leaving him to fend for himself.

It wasn't like he didn't believe his brother was capable, but despite their different mothers, they were inseparable since they were children.

Just how much of a burden had his death left on Huaisang's shoulders?

"I kept whichever corpses were complete with all limbs. I don't know about anything other than this.."

It's likely they would only be able to know what was going on after they pieced together both the corpse and soul. Aside from the fact that it was a man with a tall physique, long limbs, a muscular body, and a high level of cultivation, they did not know anything else about the mysterious corpse.

"Who do you guys think it is?"

"A strong man with a high level of cultivation... Could it be Wen Ruohan?"

"I doubt that. But it doesn't have to be someone well-known, does it? They just have to be strong to fit the criteria."

"Surely with a high level of cultivation, they'd be a renowned figure within the cultivation world. Wen Ruohan isn't such a bad guess."

"Didn't he die, like, 15 years before this?"

"Someone could have preserved his body.."

"Who would do that?"

"Hmm," the mentioned man idly fiddled with his hair, "If it *is* my corpse, which I doubt it is, then I'm glad it was used to bring Wangxian together on an adventure."

"Wow, you've got guts." Li Daiyu tutted, "I'd like to see someone else act so calm knowing that they could be seeing their own dismembered corpse."

Fortunately, the ghoul hand soon pointed at where the next step would take place-- Southwest. They followed the hand's direction and arrived at Yueyang.

"Looks like our dear friend here was cut into pieces," Wei Wuxian cheerily spoke, "And not only that, the body parts were scattered all over the place. Just how much hatred did the murderer hold for him? Let's just pray that his pieces aren't too tiny."

Nie Mingjue was glad he hadn't seen Jin Guangyao thus far.

If he had, well, the man would already have lost all of his limbs.

Xue Yang smiled at Lan Jingyi, who in turn began to shift nervously, "Exhuming a corpse is *very* undignified behavior."

In the corner, Wei Wuxian added, "*cough* Xiao Xingchen *cough*"

"What is it, Wuxian?" Xiao Xingchen asked, deliberately ignoring Xue Yang's echoing laughter.

Jingyi was two steps away from untying Xue Yang and announcing him as his new best friend.

One can't have too many best friends, right?

Lan Wangji asked, "How is the curse mark?"

Wei Wuxian sheepishly answered, "It faded a bit, but it's not completely gone. Chances are we can only find a way to remove it after we find the whole corpse. It's not a hindrance."

"Awh, is he getting shyyy~?"

"How cute!"

"Hold on, hold on." Jiang Cheng smiled at Wei Wuxian, "...Not a hindrance? Wei Wuxian, this sounds oddly familiar, doesn't it?"

"A-Xian," Jiang Yanli added with her signature beam, "Do you want to come and have a chat with me?"

Wei Wuxian pouted, "Shijie, Jiang Cheng, I'm sorry.. Don't tease me."

Lan Wangji clearly didn't believe his words, 'How much is 'a bit'"

Wei Wuxian awkwardly chuckled, "A bit is just a bit. How do I explain it? How about I take my clothes off and show you?"

"Take them off after we return." Lan Wangji deadpanned, to which Wei Wuxian laughed at.

"WHAT?!" Li Daiyu exclaimed.

Nie Huaisang nervously smiled, "...Uh, Li-Guniang.. Breathe.."

"Huaisang, if I suffer a heart attack today, please bury me with my favorite cutsleeve novels."

"Wait.. So it was *YOU* who said that earlier?!"

"WILL YOU PROMISE ME?!" Li Daiyu sounded greatly aggrieved, so Nie Huaisang hastily nodded.

"Good.." She continued, even as a cough escaped her throat. "Don't forget.. To put *The Resentment of Chunshan* [3] in my arms.."

"Whoa, you've read that too!"

"Huai...sang.."

"Okay! I will, I will!"

"Good." Li Daiyu swayed where she sat, only to fall into Nie Huaisang's arms, "I just.. wish I got to finish watching this.. and... complete their story.."

As her eyes came to a close, the majority of the rooms' gazes were on them.

A twitch of a smile appeared on Nie Huaisang's face as he wailed, "LI-GUNIANG!"

"Did I just watch someone die?"

"Is it really possible to die because something was too cute?"

"Why is no one screaming?"

"Guys, I think I hear someone playing a sad tune on the erhu.."

"Wait.. I hear it too!"

"You're right... Is it raining?"

"No, we aren't outside, you idiot."

"Tch," Chu Rong clicked her tongue, "A-Yu, so dramatic."

"You. Haven't. Changed. A. Bit." She flicked Li Daiyu in the forehead, causing the latter's eyes to jump open.

"I... I didn't die?!" Her voice was shaky, though it was probably just her holding back laughter.

"Li-Guniang"! Nie Huaisang cradled her close, hiding his face behind a curtain of his hair.

Even his invincible "I-don't-know" face wasn't enough to hide his grin.

Ah, Li-Guniang was truly amusing.

'Before, in order to escape as soon as possible, I tried as hard as I could to disgust others, from feigning madness to purposely losing face.'

"Hanguang-Jun! Let's sleep together!"

"Good idea."

"Hanguang-Jun, let's bathe together!"

"Amazing."

"Hanguang-Jun, am I pretty?"

"Yes."

"Absolutely."

"Prettier than my mother."

"You're gonna get disowned if you keep saying things like that, you know."

Wei Wuxian shook his head fondly, 'Who would've known that he recognized me ever since long ago.'

"Did you see that?" Wen Ruohan exclaimed, pointing at the screen. "He shook his head fondly! Fondly!!!"

"Yes I did see that." Li Daiyu nodded, "In fact, it's replaying in my head right now and I've decided that I want him to USE that bloody head for once, and MARRY LAN WANGJI."

"So aggressive.." Nie Huaisang tutted. "But I can't bring myself to disagree either.."

"Hanguang-Jun, do you think that the people who set out dear friend's hand in Mo Village and made it attack your juniors, and the people who sewed his legs on another corpse and buried them in the wall, are the same group of people?"

"There are two groups," Lan Wangji added.

"Ha!" A middle-aged man exclaimed, clapping his hands together as emphasis. "Do you see that? Aiyo, where's the money? Hand me the money! My smart brain is too advanced for you idiots to comprehend!"

"Don't get too cocky just because you figured that out!"

"Right! ..I knew Second Young Master Lan was a cut sleeve before all of you!"

"Aish, none of us old folk are interested in that. Go over to the girlies, old Chang."

"Right, right. If you want to discuss cutsleeve relationships, go over to the girlies. None of us old folk are interested in that."

"Old Liu, that's what I just said."

Old Liu stroked his goatee, "Aish, guess I'm getting old. I used to be able to hear birds as far as 10 li! I was known as "The great-hearer Liu!""

Old Chang shook his head with a frown, "Old Liu, hearer isn't a word. I guess your wife yelled at you too often and your hearing became bad, ahahaha!"

The group of men began to chuckle, but came to a stop as Old Liu said, "Eh? What do you mean? My wife died long ago."

"..."

"..."

Jingyi shook his head with a serious face, "Well that went dark real quick.."

Xue Yang snorted, "You amuse me."

Wei Wuxian grinned, "Great minds think alike."

"Taking such pains to sew the legs to another corpse and hide them in a wall obviously meant that they didn't want the limbs to be discovered. Purposely tossing out the left hand to attack the GusuLan Sect's people was to cause attention and investigation."

"One went to great lengths to hide everything, while the other attacked rashly, almost as if it wanted to be discovered. They're probably not the same group of people."

"So.. One is a bad guy and one is a.. Good guy?"

"Uhm, I guess..."

"But instead of getting people to investigate it, can't they just gather the evidence themselves and reveal the bad guy?"

"Yeah, it's that simple! Why couldn't they?"

"Perhaps they are infamous to all and are too afraid to speak up! So they wanted Lan Wangji and Wei Wuxian to do it for them!"

"I'm pretty sure no one had a reputation worse than Wei Wuxian's."

"Fair point."

"They might have been physically unable to collect the body."

"Elaborate,"

Old Chang stroked his goatee, "Well, for example, if their cultivation was low, they wouldn't be able to capture the pieces due to the overwhelming amount of resentful energy."

"That makes sense! You're so smart, elder!"

"Mn," Lan Wangji agreed.

"Mn," The viewers parroted.

Wei Wuxian continued, "The people who hid the legs knew about the QingheNie Sect's saber hall tradition, while the people who let the left hand loose knew about the

GusuLan sect's plans. I don't think either of them has simple intents. The secrets are piling up."

"Things are getting spicy." Li Daiyu rubbed her hands together with a wide grin.

"Things are getting rather interesting," Chu Rong corrected, resting her chin on a hand, "Oh, how I wish I was there to have such fun myself.."

"I think we all do."

"Nah, rather, we'd just be screaming over wangxian the whole time rather than actually investigating."

"True, that.

"One step at a time," Lan Wangji spoke.

"How did you recognize me?"

"Think on your own."

Wei Wuxian sighed, 'Trap failed!'

"I actually want to know now. This is too confusing."

"Well, I doubt Wei Wuxian or Lan Wangji will tell us."

Wei Wuxian spoke, "Where are we going to search for the clues at Yueyang?"

Lan Wangji replied, "To find the cultivation sect of this area."

Xue Yang paused for a brief second before his usual grin surfaced once again.

"My honorable Hanguang-Jun, it isn't that I want to purposely shame you, but you really can't do without me when handling things outside!" Wei Wuxian teased, "If you ask around like this, id be surprised if you actually managed to get results."

"Mn," Lan Wangji let a smile creep up his lips, "Then how should I ask?"

Ouyang Zizhen shook his head disbelievingly, "He knows."

Jingyi nodded. "Right, he knows."

Jin Ling tutted, "He definitely knows."

Wei Wuxian added with a pout, "Aiyo, Lan Zhan *always* knows."

"Didn't you lot already stop this?!" Jiang Cheng wanted to punch something. "And you!" He glanced to Wei Wuxian. "Why are you joining in?!"

Wei Wuxian rubbed his eyes like a wronged maiden, "A-Cheng, why are you bullying your poor shixiong? He's really sad now!"

Jiang Cheng simply 'tsk'ed before turning away.

Wei Wuxian pointed at a nearby building, which was none other than a Wineshop, "Go over there, of course!"

"I'm honestly not even surprised at this point," Jiang Cheng rubbed the bridge of his nose with obvious displeasure.

"Now now, A-Cheng. All that matters is that A-Xian is having fun." Jiang Yanli gently stroked her brother's head.

"A-Jie.. You're always so easy on him.." If Jiang Cheng was pouting, nobody spoke out.

"Our little XianXian has always been a free spirit. The second you look away, he'll be making trouble somewhere else." She added fondly, to which Jiang Cheng slightly smiled at.

The moment was ruined by a loud, "Right, XianXian is three!"

Jiang Cheng rolled his eyes. "Can you *not* say that every five seconds?"

"High-quality Yueyang wine!" The owner advertised, "Please come and check us out!"

Wei Wuxian reasoned, "The waiters here are usually young and hard working. And with so many customers a day and so many mouths spreading gossip, nothing strange going on around the area would escape their eyes and ears."

Wen Ruohan nodded in approval, "Well thought, my son! That is a genius plan! You gather information, as well as drink to your heart's content! Killing two birds with one stone! We should definitely drink together sometime!"

Wen Qing scrunched her nose, "You're still fixated on the whole 'drinking with Wei Wuxian' thing?"

"Yes, I am."

"I-" Wen Qing sighed, "You're so ridiculous."

"Mn," Lan Wangji deadpanned, "It is obvious that you simply want to have some wine."

Wei Wuxian nervously chuckled.

"Wei Wuxian, what *is it* with you and wine?"

"Eh? You wanna know our relationship?" Wei Wuxian hummed in thought, "We could be called.. soulmates! Not even death can part us!"

"What about Lan Wangji?! Isn't he your soulmate?" A girl spoke up.

"Ai, of course Lan Zhan's my soulmate." Wei Wuxian hugged his husband's arm with a pout, "I have three hearts. Two for Lan Zhan, and one for wine."

"..." Lan Wangji hesitated for a moment before he said, "I... All my hearts belong to Wei Ying." His blush was creeping up his ears and onto his cheeks.

"Hey! Stop feeding us dog food!"

"Right! ..You're making me feel more single than the time when I was rejected!"

"...That's kinda deep."

"L-Lan Zhan?!" Wei Wuxian was somehow startled by the comment and turned bright red.

Lan Xichen chuckled into a sleeve.

"Is that a blush I see?!" Chu Rong narrowed her eyes, resting her chin in a palm, "Wei Wuxian, that is oddly out of character."

Nie Huaisang furrowed his eyebrows, "..You act like you've known him for years."

"Oh, but I have." Chu Rong held out her fingers, preparing to count, "There are the stories told years ago when he was dead,"

"Which, may I add, were lies."

"There's also what we are watching right now.."

".It's only been a few hours. It doesn't count."

"There are also the rumors about the famous Hanguang-Jun and Yiling Laozu circulating around."

"W-What? What rumors?" Wei Wuxian inched closer; he was clearly interested.

"Oh, but this humble one doesn't dare speak up, as she can get... *quite shy* ." Chu Rong batted her eyelashes coquettishly with a timid smile.

"Ay," Li Daiyu gently nudged her side, "Who's shy? The other day, didn't you kick a guy in his-"

"Wei-Gongzi, it seems that you really want to know about the things I've heard." Chu Rong smoothly interrupted.

Wei Wuxian paused.

"I've heard countless stories about your.. *adventures*. And they were quite amusing if I do say so myself." Chu Rong chuckled. Wei Wuxian decided she was as scary as Wen Qing.

"Ah- No need, no need." He nervously laughed, "Ahaha...hahaha..."

"What adventures?" Jingyi asked, oblivious to the way he was just increasing Wei Wuxian's sorrow.

"There there," Lan Wangji soothed, stroking Wei Wuxian's back.

Wei Wuxian stared with his mouth agape. *Lan Zhan isn't even trying to stop her! Who's the shameless one now?!*

"I've heard of how the notorious Hanguang-Jun and Yiling Laozu were like a pair of ferocious dragons. They slaughtered evil spirits, saved countless lives, and accomplished many good deeds for the cultivation world." Chu Rong hid her smile behind a sleeve.

"Oh, haha... ahahaha!" Wei Wuxian nervously chuckled, "So that was it..."

"Eh?" Chu Rong tilted her head innocently. She was smiling, the bastard. "What did you think I was talking about, Wei-Gongzi?"

Jiang Cheng decided that this woman was his new companion. (Translation: friend)

Nie Huaisang looked at Li Daiyu approvingly. Li-Guniang has found herself an amazing friend!

Chapter End Notes

[1] Wearing a green hat implies you're being cheated on.

[2] An excerpt from chapter 27 of the novel by exiledrebelscanlations

[3] A BL novel from 'Scum Villain's Self Saving System', written by Liu Mingyuan.

Yay! New OC is introduced!

I'll try my best to update for Halloween as its Wei Ying's birthday (can't promise anything tho) (*ﾉωﾉ)

Speculation II - The Present

Chapter Summary

Discussion about the Yueyang Chang Clan!

Chapter Notes

I updated this early as a special chapter!

Happy Halloween! \(\cdot\forall\cdot\)/

Also, let's wish a happy birthday to the one and only Wei Wuxian! (/●＼●)/*:-°♦

I'm warning you in advance, I had like 5 minutes to edit this lol

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

They made their way to the wine shop, where a waiter cheerily greeted them, "Sir, please sit! Please sit!"

Wei Wuxian spoke, "Let's have some good wine,"

"Agreed!" Wen Ruohan chuckled, "Good wine means a good temperament!"

Wen Qing muttered, "Is wine the only thing you ever talk about?"

"No!" Wen Ruohan laughed, "Wang! Xian! Forever!"

"Stop." Wen Qing stared in disgust, "Go away, I don't know you."

Wen Ning giggled, "Sect Leader, I- I think you- think you're more fun like this."

Wen Qing gently stroked Wen Ning's head. Her brother was an angel.

(She won't fail him this time.)

The waiter smirked, "Sir, our wine doesn't smell strong, but just wait until you drink it up! If you can still stand after you finish it, I'll adopt your surname!"

Jiang Cheng snorted, "If Wei Wuxian actually manages to get drunk, or Lan Wangji doesn't get jealous in the next five minutes, then I'm the God Xie Lian."

Jingyi paused, "Was that sarcasm, or..."

"Of course it was sarcasm!" Jin Ling rolled his eyes, "If my JiuJiu is Xie Lian, then I'm the Yiling Patriarch!"

"WHAT?!" Jingyi gasped, "Jin Ling, why did you say that?! You aren't senior Wei!"

"That's the point, you idiot." Jin Ling deadpanned.

"Why is everyone pretending to be someone else?" Someone finally asked.

Wei Wuxian grinned, "Oh? How much would make it count?"

The waiter exclaimed, "One jar!"

Wei Wuxian countered, "Then give me three jars,"

Wen Ruohan began to clap his hands together rather loudly, "He's my son all right!"

Upon seeing that everyone looked at him like he was a lunatic, Li Daiyu began to clap as well.

The dull silence in the room eventually created an awkward atmosphere.

The waiter nervously chuckled, "Sir, three jars at our house doesn't come at a cheap price..."

"What's there to worry about when you have Lan Wangji's money pouch?!"

"Right, Wei Wuxian can always rely on him!"

Lan Wangji placed some silver down on the table, "Is this enough?"

"Ah, I love my Lan Zhan so much!" Wei Wuxian swooned, "I can always count on him to buy me the best wine!"

Lan Qiren paused, "What.. Why does Wangji have that expression?"

Lan Xichen knowingly chuckled into a sleeve.

"Lan Wangji is as smug as they come." Li Daiyu tutted, "He's just rubbing it in now."

The waiter beamed, "Yes, yes! It'll come shortly!"

Wei Wuxian chuckled, "We're doing business here, aren't we? First, we help their business, then we talk about other things. After we pay, it'll be easier to get them talking."

"Wei Wuxian, you aren't fooling anyone."

"Right, who do you think you're fooling?"

"Speaking of it," he then grabbed the cloth that was bound to the top of the jar and drank a few gulps, "Have any strange things been happening around the area?"

The waiter inquired, "What sort of strange things?"

"Haunted houses, deserted cemeteries, corpses that were cut apart, and so on."

"Corpses that were cut apart?" Jiang Cheng looked like he wanted to facepalm, "Wei Wuxian, is it every day that you see dismembered corpses across the street?"

Wei Wuxian finally answered, "...no."

"Yes," The waiter answered, "But not right now. It was ten years ago."

"Oh?" Wei Wuxian wrapped an arm around the man's shoulders, "Carry on,"

Wei Wuxian inquired, "Lan Zhan, what's wrong?"

"...sorry," Lan Wangji gently released his grip from where it had been squeezing his husband's arm.

"Eh? Lan Zhan, don't tell me.." A grin made its way up Wei Wuxian's face, "You're jealous?"

". Ridiculous," Lan Wangji's face was too thin for this.

"Lan Zhan, you're so adorable!" Wei Wuxian cooed, clinging onto the other's arm.

"Wei Ying is."

"Eh?"

". Wei Ying is adorable." Lan Wangji looked away from Wei Wuxian's beaming face, his ears a fuming red.

"I didn't know it was possible to love someone this much!" Wei Wuxian squealed, "Lan Zhan, Lan Zhan, I love you thiiis much!" He held his arms out wide to show his point, but in Lan Wangji's eyes, it was inviting.

"Mn, love Wei Ying." Lan Wangji hauled Wei Wuxian into a hug and held him close.

"Dog food![1]" Ouyang Zizhen yelled across the room, "If you keep feeding us dog food, I'll—" he was quickly silenced by his father's glare.

"I feel like... I was born to watch this." Chu Rong shook her head with a smile.

"Definitely not creepy," Nie Huaisang lamented, "But I totally agree with you."

Li Daiyu sighed dreamily, "Huaisang, you're well-known for being a talented artist, right?"

"Yes I am, why?"

"I want a wangxian themed fan, wangxian portraits, wangxian paintings, and I'd also like to hear some stories about wangxian as teenagers."

"Although you're seeing their past right now, sure." Nie Huaisang definitely didn't find it over-the-top, "In exchange, you owe me a favor."

"Deal!"

"Not far away from here, there's quite a lovely residence, called the Chang Clan's residence. Ten years ago, the entire Chang Clan died, and I even heard that they were all scared to death!"

Xue Yang idly fiddled with his fingernails, the smile on his face remained unwavering.

Jingyi sent him a questioning look.

Wei Wuxian questioned, "How was the Chang Clan destroyed?"

"I only heard this from other people, yeah? One night, the noise of someone slamming on the door suddenly came from within the Chang Clan's residence. The slamming was so loud that it almost reached the heavens."

Xiao Xingchen's complexion became pale.

"Inside, there came screams and cries as if everyone was locked in, unable to come out."

Cries of "Help us!" and "Let us out!" were followed by loud bangs that resounded within the room.

"..That's awful," Someone murmured.

"What could have happened?"

"Is it a resentful spirit?"

"Perhaps.. Perhaps it was the hand!"

"This happened ten years ago, though.."

"..Oh, you're right."

Old Chang stroked his goatee, "But if it was a resentful spirit, I doubt it could have slaughtered an entire *cultivation clan*!"

"Eh? Who said it was a cultivation clan?"

Old Chang laughed, "Truth to be told, I used to have a friend who was in the Yueyang Chang clan!"

"Woah! What was it like?"

"I dunno, never been."

"...Oh.."

"Strange, isn't it? The door was bolted from within, So if you were on the inside and you wanted to get out, you could've just opened it, couldn't you?"

".Does it sound like they were able to open it?"

"Where'd you leave your brain, old man?!"

"As the night passed, the wailing inside grew quieter and quieter. On the next day, as the sun came out, the doors of the Chang Clan opened on their own. inside the house, all of the men and women, ten-or-so masters, and dozens of servants have been scared to death."

The sound eventually receded into small whimpers. The Chang Residence grew quiet.

Xiao Xingchen's hands shook from where they were clenched into fists.

"Xingchen, breathe." Song Lan advised, holding his best friend's hands despite his dislike of contact.

Following Song Lan's commands, Xiao Xingchen eventually calmed his breathing. He slightly smiled, "Thank you, Zichen."

A-Qing hurried to Xiao Xingchen's side. "Dao- Shizun! Are you okay?"

Xiao Xingchen sent her a questioning look.

"Well- I mean, flying on swords and stuff is cool," A-Qing crossed her arms with a huff, "You both are cultivators, so why can't I be one?"

"No..." Xiao Xingchen shook his head in confusion, "Why did you call me shizun?"

"Hmph!" A-Qing turned to face him with a serious expression, "Why can't I call you shizun? You're a cultivator, and are now officially my mentor!"

"When did I decide that?" Xiao Xingchen moved his hand to his eyes, "But I can't teach you, I'm bli-"

"..."

"..."

"Shizun, when we leave, teach me to fly a sword!"

As he watched the two, Song Lan's lips quirked slightly upwards.

"After then, for a long time, anyone who walked by the Chang Residence at night could hear the noises of slamming on walls coming from the inside! It only stopped in the past few years or so!"

"So... about how you mentioned resentful spirits."

Old Liu rolled his eyes, "Old Chang, I'm always right. Why must you doubt me?"

"Why is everyone betting over everything that happens? Just-- *watch it .*"

A man, supposedly the owner of the Liquor shop, grabbed him by the head and yelled, "You're gonna die! Why aren't you doing work and are instead telling old tales about people dying?!"

Li Daiyu commented, "The guy's got a point though."

Wei Wuxian raised a hand, "Five jars please!"

"Look at him, spending Lan Wangji's money like it's water." Someone tsked.

"That's the point. It's Lan Wangji's money!"

"Yeah! It's like how you completely destroy your parents' home but dutifully clean your own!"

"..." Chu Rong spoke after a long pause, "..Who raised you?"

The young junior chuckled, "My mother, who else?"

Lan Wangji placed down to pieces of silver, "The price of ten jars, keep the change."

The owner's demeanor immediately changed as he patted his worker on the shoulder with a soft smile, "Look after the customers properly. Don't go running around!"

"...Well, he sure changed his mind fast."

"Money.. It's truly the most powerful thing."

Wei Wuxian spoke, "You can continue."

The waiter proceeded, "Although the head of their clan, Chang Ping, was away from home and survived-"

Wei Wuxian interjected, "Didn't you say that the whole clan died?"

"They did. Although I said he survived, it was only for a short while. After a few years, the Clan's head, Chang Ping, died as well. This time, the death was even more horrifying. He was killed by Lingchi with a sword!"

There were various gasps around the room.

"Killed by Lingchi[2]?!"

"How gruesome!"

"Who would have done such a thing?!"

"No righteous cultivator would, that's for sure!"

Aren't there any cultivation Sects stationed around the area?" Wei Wuxian asked, chewing on a sunflower seed, "They didn't even deal with such a big thing?"

"He seems pretty calm about this."

"No joke, does *anything* phase Wei Wuxian?"

"Lan Wangji does."

"..."

"The waiter put a sunflower seed in his mouth, "Young Master, you don't know. The cultivation Sect stationed at Yueyang was the Chang Clan! The people are all dead. Who'd bet here to deal with things?"

Both Wei Wuxian and Lan Wangji realized, 'The Chang Clan that was wiped out was the cultivation Sect stationed in this area?!"

"Woah, Old Chang said that earlier! Is he a prophet?!"

"No, he already said how his friend was part of the clan."

"Oh, sorry, sorry, I didn't hear."

The waiter continued, "I thought the Chang Clan must have been targeted by the other cultivators. Isn't killing people for the sake of treasures common or something? Although I don't know who exactly did it, it was apparently related to a very famous villain."

Wei Wuxian smirked against the cup of wine he held, "Let me guess. You're gonna say you don't know who the villain is, aren't you?"

"Guess again." The waiter cheerily replied, "I definitely know this one. He was called something along the lines of 'peculiar'... Right, 'Patriarch. The Yiling Patriarch!'"

"Wasn't he some sort of legend to people? Why can't they do as much as remember his title?! He was known more by it as well!"

"How can this man even be called an information gatherer?"

"Ridiculous, that it is."

"Why are you guys getting angry..?" Wei Wuxian scrunched his eyebrows, ".. I should be the one fuming right now.."

Wei Wuxian spat out his wine as the man continued, "Yep, that's right! His surname was Wei. He's called Wei Wuqian, I think."

"Wei- WEI WUQIAN?!" Nie Huaisang heaved, clutching his stomach as he laughed.

"Huaisang, I-" Li Daiyu was giggling so much that she could feel tears surface in the form of pinpricks, "I'm sorry, but *who* spread that false information?"

"Hey!" Wei Wuxian yelled, pouting, "Stop laughing!"

"How did 'Wuxian' become 'Wuqian[3]?' Chu Rong didn't know what to do with her hands. She was hysterical. "Someone tell me I heard that right."

Wen Ruohan scrunched his eyebrows, then leaned forwards, then crossed his arms, then placed his hands together, then frowned, "Hey, it's kind of accurate though."

If Wei Wuxian was drinking a jar of Emperor's Smile, he'd have spat it out already.

Even Jiang Fengmian, Yu Ziyuan, and the small group of disciples crowded around them were entertained. (If Yu Ziyuan's scowl reducing by 0.87% was anything to go by.)

Jiang Cheng was unable to muffle the short chuckles and snorts, much to Lan Xichen's amusement.

Upon seeing everyone so happy, like the angel she was, Jiang Yanli smiled.

Jin Zixuan covered his eyes. His wife was too dazzling!

"People always sound so hateful and scared when they mention him."

"..."

"..."

"..."

"Uh, can someone pass me a blank talisman?OhThank you."

Wei Wuxian blinked, '*I'm made responsible for even such a far incident?*'

"Let's go," Lan Wangji said, clearly disturbed.

"Hey, what's that? I think I smell vinegar.. I wonder why.." Li Daiyu sent a sideways glance to Lan Wangji.

Lan Jingyi sniffed the air, "What? I don't smell any vinegar.."

Jin Ling made a face as if he were looking at an idiot, which he clearly was, "You idiot, she means that Lan Wangji is jealous!"

Wei Wuxian stood up from his seat, "Then let's go and check before we come back to rest."

"Hey, hey, Young Masters, are you going to the Chang Residence right now? Whoa, now that's pretty cool. Are you two cultivators as well? Is the work you two do hard? How much do you earn? You probably get a ton, right? Let me ask you something-Is it difficult to get started? I-

"He's quite enthusiastic, isn't he?"

".Money sure does rule over everything."

"Young Master, the one beside you.. Why was he glaring at me?" The waiter asked, staring at Lan Wangji's retreating back.

"So cute!" A girl squealed.

"Jealous Lan Wangji is adorable!"

"Hey!" Wei Wuxian bit his lip. '*If they think this was cute, then what about when Lan Zhan gets drunk?! Oh no!! I must protect him!!!*'

"Ha!" Li Daiyu slapped her hands together before pointing a finger at the screen, "Told you that he was jealous!"

Nie Huaisang nodded. "Yes, you did indeed tell me that Lan Wangji was jealous."

Wei Wuxian chuckled, "This friend of mine was brought up too strict. He absolutely hates it when other people are being too comfortable with each other in front of him. Isn't that strange?"

"I think it's actually him just being jealous, but I'll agree with you anyway."

The waiter frowned, "Strange indeed. The way his eyes were, you'd think that I was putting my arm around his wife.."

The girls looked like they'd just experienced having an epiphany.

"That is it! I declare this nameless man my new best friend!"

"+1"

"+1"

Wei Wuxian paused, suddenly recalling the previous bet, "Right, I finished a jar."

The waiter paused. "Huh?"

"Still standing."

"See, I was right." Jiang Cheng rolled his eyes, "How many times has this happened, Wei Wuxian? Four? Seven?"

"A man's alcohol tolerance should not be underestimated!" Wei Wuxian cheerily replied, "Though, feel free to overestimate Lan Zhan's!"

Lan Wangji simply sat there and stared.

"...Hehe, sorry Lan Zhan." After a moment, Wei Wuxian hurriedly added, "I wasn't mocking you! I was just-"

"I know," Lan Wangji's lips twitched, indicating that he was, in fact, most likely amused.

"Oh.. Ohhh! Um.. Wow!" The waiter chuckled, "I'm not kidding, but this is my first time seeing someone who can still stand and speak without getting their tongues tied up after downing a jar."

"He's clearly regretting his decision."

"He's *definitely* regretting his decision."

"Run away while you can, good sir!"

The waiter licked his dry lips, "Young Master, what's your last name?"

"My last name.." Wei Wuxian hummed in thought, "..Is Lan!"

Wen Ruohan choked on his saliva.

As she patted his back, Li Daiyu's eyes were glued to the screen, "He- He's basically saying that he married into Lan Wangji's clan!"

"No, rather, wouldn't telling the man his last name give his identity away?"

"Oh! Right, the man mentioned how he knew the Yiling Patriarch's surname was Wei."

Wei Wuxian despaired, "It still perplexes me how people thought my courtesy name was Wuqian.."

The waiter held both hands to his mouth as he yelled, "Yes, from today on, my surname is Lan!"

A couple of meters ahead, Lan Wangji tripped over his own feet.

Wei Wuxian was having some serious mental complications.

Only *now* is he noticing things he never did before! But everyone else is, too!!

"Hey, hey, everyone, I'm just reminding you that Lan Zhan and I are married! We love each other very very much!"

The girls nodded in understanding.

"Right! You love each other so-so-so-so much!"

"We give you our approval!"

"Get married again just so I can witness it!"

Jiang Cheng turned to Lan Xichen, "How do you deal with this every day?"

Lan Xichen smiled, "You get used to it after a while."

Jiang Cheng looked back at the shamelessly kissing couple, then turned back to the jade, "Wanna come to Lotus Pier for a few days?"

"It would be my honor."

Wei Wuxian giggled as he skipped along to catch up to the Lan, "Thanks for the treat, Hanguang-Jun. I made him take on your surname."

After a moment, he added, "Right, why didn't you let me keep on asking back then?"

Lan Wangji answered, "I suddenly recalled that I have indeed heard of the incident of the YueyangChang Clan. There was no need to ask."

"Woah, hold on there, bro. Now that's not true, is it?"

"Denial is unhealthy." Wen Ruohan added with a serious nod.

"Right, Wen Ruohan, you've said that so many times now. We get it."

"Anyways, isn't not lying one of their rules or something?"

"Lying is forbidden!" Jingyi added with a beam.

"Right, lying is forbidden! Lan Wangji, lying is forbidden!"

Lan Wangji turned to Lan Qiren and cupped his hands together in a bow, "Uncle, when we get back to Cloud Recess, I will copy-"

"No need, no need." Lan Qiren massaged the bridge of his nose. If he were to discipline his nephew for every rule that was broken, there'd be an endless list of punishments.

"Before you tell me, let me ask you something." Wei Wuxian spoke, **"Um, I wasn't the one who wiped out the Chang Clan, was I?"**

"How could you slaughter an entire clan and not know?"

"I think Wei Wuxian can be a bit oblivious at times."

"But don't forget how he killed all of those cultivators at Nevernight!"

Wen Ruohan paused, "This was mentioned at the start, too.. Are you referring to when I and my Sect were.. removed?"

"Hey," The disciple continued, completely ignoring Wen Ruohan. "I heard that Resentful Energy muddles the mind. Do you think that happened this time, too?"

"But this was ten years ago. Wei Wuxian was dead then."

"Oh, you're right."

Wen Ruohan blinked, "So... can someone answer my question now?"

Chapter End Notes

[1] - Eating dog food is where people have PDA in front of single people

[2] - Lingchi - Where the flesh on someone's body is sliced off piece by piece with a saber or sword three thousand six hundred times, until all of the flesh is gone and only a skeleton is left.

[3] - *Wuxian means 'No Envy', whereas *Wuqian means 'No Money'

Next Chapter: Going to Yi City! (๑ゝڡ໏)

Speculation III - The Present

Chapter Summary

The mystery of the Chang Clan is slowly being disclosed!

Chapter Notes

screams in denial ok so like I know how last chapter I said it was the Yi City arc, but I was getting too ahead of myself.

At least It will be here in a few chapters! So, don't resent me for this lmao-

Y'all my Guzheng finally arrived *sob* it's so pretty

Also, they made an eng dub for Heaven Official's blessing- I'm sorry, just, why...?

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Lan Wangji shook his head, "No. The killing was not done by you, but it was related to you."

"..Related to him?"

"To me? How so?"

"There are two relationships. First, one of the people involved is called 'Xiao Xingchen'. He shared a past with your mother."

Xiao Xingchen fondly shook his head with a smile, " *Shijie* ... You're just like her, Wuxian."

Wei Wuxian's eyes sparkled at the mention of his mother, "Shishu, when this is over, can you tell me some stories about my mother?!"

Xiao Xingchen seemed to light up, "Of course."

If Jiang Fengmian was drinking vinegar[1], no one said anything.

"..My mother?"

Cangse Sanren was a disciple of Baoshan Sanren. Wei Wuxian is the child of Wei Changze, a servant of the YunmengJiang sect, and Cangse Sanren, a rogue cultivator.

"So.. Wei Wuxian's Martial Grandmother is the immortal Baoshan Sanren?!"

"Heavens, what a connection!"

Jiang Cheng deflated at the mention of the immortal. Her name brought up unwanted memories.

Baoshan Sanren dwells in an unknown celestial mountain and often brings abandoned children up the mountain to be her disciples. However, all of the pupils have to vow that they would devote their whole lives to cultivation, never leaving the mountain nor entering human society. Or else, no matter what the reason is, they are never to return again.

"Xiao Xingchen was a disciple of Baoshan Sanren as well." Lan Wangji spoke.

Wei Wuxian blinked, "So that means Xiao Xingchen is my Shishu."

Xiao Xingchen smiled, "Indeed I am."

Wei Wuxian, the angel, beamed.

Lan Wangji spoke, "He was well-known when he left the mountain twelve years ago. He is rarely mentioned now."

'Twelve years ago is exactly a year after the siege at the Burial Mounds. Seems like I just so happened to have missed it.' Wei Wuxian pondered.

Back then, whenever someone had a difficult matter at hand, the first thing they thought of was to find him for help. He never refused anything either, which was why people often spoke of him with appraisal.

"That's the aim of all cultivators," A junior spoke, "This 'Xiao Xingchen' is quite admirable!"

"Exactly right!"

But he didn't want to depend on any sects. He wanted to build a new sect with his closest friend Song Lan, a sect that didn't value bloodline. That was around when the destruction of the Yueyang Clan happened.

"Xiao Xingchen, the bright moon, the gentle breeze; Song Zichen, the distant snow, the bitter frost."

Ouyang Zizhen glanced to Xiao Xingchen and Song Lan, who were busy watching the screen, "Well that's quite accurate."

Wei Wuxian asked, "Oh? So did he uncover the truth?"

Lan Wangji spoke, "He did. The murderer was called Xue Yang."

The room was rendered silent.

Xue Yang chuckled, "Ah, I guess it's *this time* already."

The silence persisted for a few more seconds before there was a flurry of people shouting and screaming.

"Get your claws away from that young Lan!"

"Shixiong! I'll save you!"

There was the sound of a sword unsheathing, followed by a woeful cry of "Brother Cheng!"

"Heavens, have people still not learned their lesson?!"

"Screw propriety, Xue Yang must die!"

"Hey, that's not how a Lan should speak!"

"Xue Yang was supposed to be dead years ago!"

"And so were you!"

A silence.

And then--

"EVERYONE SHUT UP!" Jiang Cheng yelled.

"No! You shut up!"

"You- You dare say that to Sect Leader Jiang!"

"I dare!"

"Fight me!"

"Hey! Hey!" Wei Wuxian called, turning all attention to him. "I've already got Xue Yang handled. One of my juniors is watching him. You think I'd let that little delinquent slip through my fingers?"

"..."

"....Wow, the Yiling Patriarch actually shut everyone up. So commendable."

Ever since the age of fifteen, Xue Yang had been a delinquent in the area of Kuizhou. He was known far and wide for his radiant smile, inhumane means, and merciless personality. Everyone's expressions changed whenever he was brought up in a conversation. His courtesy name was ChengMei.

Xue Yang sharply chuckled; a sound that sent shivers down people's spines, "I no longer affiliate myself with the name 'Chengmei,'"

If not for his pride, Meng Yao would have silently prayed for his life.

-

A girl crossed her arms, "I feel like 'radiant smile' and 'inhumane' shouldn't be put into the same sentence."

"Right, it sounds rather odd."

"Let's just say... *cunning* smile and inhumane means."

"But is his smile *cunning* though..?" Chu Rong tutted, "Seems kinda hot to me."

"You did NOT just say that."

"I think I just did."

Another spoke up, "Yeah, I'm a dude.. and I kinda agree.."

"Oho~" Li Daiyu grinned, "Little Young Master, what's your name?"

"I'm Yu Huizhong, a rogue cultivator."

"How come so many rogue cultivators are here?" Someone added.

"I'm Li Daiyu. The little brat to my left is Chu Rong." Li Daiyu held out a hand, "Nice to meet you, brother!"

"Mh, it's my pleasure."

After Xiao Xingchen found out the truth, he brought Xue Yang before the public and demanded heavy punishment.

"With his straightforward list of evidence, all sects had no objections, except for the LanlingJin Sect."

A lady from the Nie sect spoke, "Of course it's the Jins."

"Of course ." Another added.

"Hey!" Jin Zixun was infuriated, "What exactly do you mean by that?!"

"Oh, my apologies, all Jins can go get their cultivation crippled with the exception of my beautiful sister Mianmian, as well as Young Master Jin."

"You- How impudent!"

"Me? Impudent? I was unaware that I went by the name 'Jin Zixun'."

Jin Zixun snarled, "How dare you!"

"Objecting in such a situation ould be placing itself against the entire world. Could it be that Xue Yang was a favorite with Jin Guangshan?"

Yu Huizhong paused. "Jin Guangsha[2]?.. that reminds me, where is he?"

Li Daiyu heaved, "Bro, you did not just do that!"

"Wasn't he beaten by Lady Jiang and Madam Jin?"

"Oh, did he die?"

"I guess."

"Anyways, on with the story."

"A guest disciple."

"A mere guest disciple? No, no, I highly doubt that. Why would Jin Guangsha go out of his way to protect him then?"

"I guess they had some deeper connections."

"Are we just calling him Jin Guangsha now, or...?"

"He was a foreign disciple? Back then, the LanlingJin Sect was already one of the four most prominent sects, right? Why would they have invited a delinquent to be a guest disciple?"

"This is the second connection," Lan Wangji glanced to Wei Wuxian, "It was because of the Stygian Tiger Amulet."

The crowd was once again a parade of yells, screams, debates, and shouts.

"The Stygian Tiger Amulet? Didn't Wei Wuxian destroy it when he died?!"

"That is the most dangerous weapon to exist!"

"Besides, Wei Wuxian refused to hand it over to the Sects! How did Jin Guangshan get hold of it?!"

"Was... Was Jin Guangshan actually the one to kill Wei Wuxian?!"

"Heavens! That's a possibility; it was never clear *how* Wei Wuxian died!"

"Right! He was either killed by Sect Leader Jiang, eaten alive by his army of corpses, killed by the backlash of the stygian tiger seal, gave himself up to the clans-"

"Gosh," Wei Wuxian raised an eyebrow, "How many times can one man die? Calm your horses."

"Then, *Wei Wuxian*, tell us how you died!" A man ordered.

"Yes! Tell us!"

"Why should I?" Wei Wuxian scoffed, "Not every man likes disclosing the way he died. Why do you think it's so hard to get information from resentful spirits?"

"It's because they're resentful spirits whereas you're..."

There was a silence.

Wei Wuxian sneered, "Am I not even considered human to you? And you think I'll just hand over *whatever* you want *whenever* you want it?!"

"Wei Ying." Lan Wangji spoke.

After taking a deep breath, Wei Wuxian turned away from the men, "Sorry Lan Zhan."

"No apologies are needed between us."

"I love you."

"Mh, Love you too."

Among all of the spiritual weapons I made when I was still alive, this was the scariest and most famous one. Those who hold this seal could control corpses and malicious spirits to their will.

"It's just come to me that we'll be seeing the Yiling Patriarch in action! I can boast to my friends about this!"

"That's awfully random but good for you."

I originally wanted to use it as a means of assistance, but its power almost exceeded that of mine, its creator's.

"So the Stygian tiger amulet was stronger than Wei Wuxian himself?! Heavens!"

"No, you idiot. He said 'almost'."

"Oh."

"I heard the Stygian tiger amulet killed thousands of people! Just how strong is Wei Wuxian?!"

I've only used it two times, and both times caused great bloodshed. After the second time, I finally made the decision to destroy one-half of the seal. But before I could completely destroy the other half, the siege at the Burial Mounds happened.

The silence was uncanny.

"...So if we hadn't stormed the Burial Mounds that day, Wei Wuxian would have ended his tyranny?"

"What tyranny? When I was in Yiling, not once were there fierce corpses attacking the streets! Rather, it was more peaceful compared to before!"

"Then... What are we supposed to say to that? It's not like that justifies everything else he did..."

Wei Wuxian reasoned, "Even though the other half of the Tiger Amulet hadn't been destroyed, it's still just a piece of scrap metal. Even if the sect that got hold of it made a temple for it and worshipped it every single day, nothing would happen."

"Then did Jin Guangshan throw Xue Yang out because they couldn't use it?"

"Possibly."

Lan Wangji spoke, "Even though the recreated version was not as powerful and cannot be used for as long, it was already able to cause much trouble."

"...Didn't he just say they couldn't use it?"

"I'm so confused."

"The LanlingJin needed to keep Xue Yang so that he could continue to restore the stygian tiger seal, so they had to protect him." Wei Wuxian chuckled in disbelief, "No wonder the rumors connected the case to me."

"Ohhhhhhhh."

"Ohhhhhhhh."

"Ohhhhhhhh."

Jiang Cheng huffed, "Who is it this time?"

Wei Wuxian distinctly recalled two furious citizens in the streets cursing out his name, "If he didn't make this, our world wouldn't have encountered so many disasters!"

"I mean... The guy has a point." A Nie disciple commented.

Although the LanlingJin Sect was determined to protect Xue Yang, Xiao Xingchen didn't waver either, and the stalemate continued.

("Brother," Lan Xichen pleaded, "That was not what he meant-")

"Move!" Nie Mingjue commanded, "Let's see who dares stop me!")

Lan Xichen sent a guilty glance to Nie Mingjue. His judgment was clouded and he'd selfishly refused to acknowledge the things Mingjue-Xiong believed in. It was because of him that Mingjue-Xiong died.

"Xichen," Nie Mingjue could tell what the former was thinking. He lightly smiled; it was the kind of smile that gave you the reassurance you need.

Lan Xichen smiled back.

This finally startled Chifeng-Zun, Nie Mingjue, who hurried over to Koi Tower from elsewhere. in the end, the LanlingJin sect could only give in, promising the world that Xue Yang would be executed.

(Bound by chains, Xue Yang snarled, "Let's wait and see.")

"Damn," Xue Yang whistled, "I don't look too bad if I do say so myself."

"Narcissist." Someone muttered.

"Xue Yang, as soon as I get my cultivation back, I'll kill you and put your head on a spike!"

Xue Yang stuck his tongue out just to taunt them, "I'd like to see you try."

But as soon as Nie Mingjue left, the LanlingJin sect immediately shut Xue Yang into the dungeons and changed the original decision to a life sentence.

"Shameless!"

"How is that shameless?" A Jin replied.

"A man should never go back on their word," It was a Nie disciple this time, "Have you Jins no shame?!"

Hearing about the matter, Nie Mingjue was enraged and pressed them on again. Yet, shortly afterward, Nie Mingjue passed away from a qi deviation.

The Nie disciples deflated at the mention of the previous Sect Leader's death.

Although he was hidden and disguised, Meng Yao felt someone staring daggers through his back.

On the other hand, after Xue Yang was released, he began his revenge. The revenge wasn't even on Xiao Xingchen himself.

"Released?" Someone laughed in disbelief, "WHAT BASTARD RELEASED HIM?! I SWEAR I'M GONNA-"

"Calm down, shixiong! It happened years ago!"

"Right! You shouldn't get too attached to this mysterious... *performance* ."

"It's kind of impossible *not* to get attached," Li Daiyu muttered.

He wiped out Baixue Temple, where Xiao Xingchen's friend Song Lan grew up, and used poison to blind Song Lan's eyes.

Song Lan's lightly flinched at the mention of his blindness. It was a delicate matter.

Xiao Xingchen could only break his vow and carry Song Lan back to Baoshan Sanren's mountain and was never seen again. A year later, Song Lan left the mountain as well. His eyes were able to see light again.

If it were years ago, Jiang Cheng would have foolishly believed that Baoshan Sanren would give each of her disciples one wish as a farewell gift, Xiao Xingchen included.

But he wasn't so foolish anymore.

'Everything comes at a price,' he thought.

However, it wasn't that Baoshan Sanren's medical skills created a miracle, but rather that Xiao Xingchen dug out his own eyes and gave them to Song Lan, who was only involved because of him.

Song Lan recalled how Xue Yang had so persistently spoken of how Xingchen "Dug out his eyes for him" and placed a hand over his eyes, the eyes that had once been blind.

He then glanced to Xiao Xingchen, whose expression was heavy and downcast. It seemed like he was having trouble while thinking about the past.

Song Lan raised his hand, and very hesitantly placed it on Xiao Xingchen's shoulder, lightly patting it as reassurance.

Xiao Xingchen froze, and then smiled.

And at this time, Jin Guangshan had already passed away. Jin Guangyao took over the LanlingJin sect. To show that things were going to be different, the first thing he did after he came to power was execute Xue Yang.

Xue Yang scoffed at the reminder, "Jin Guangyao, that crafty scoundrel. The next time I see him, I'll gouge out his eyes and rip all of his limbs off!"

"DUDE!" Jingyi heaved, a hand over his mouth, "Can you not?! My stomach and mind are very sensitive!"

"..."

"Says the one who eats four bowls of rice for lunch." Jin Ling muttered.

"Hey!" Jingyi justified, "I'll have you know that a trip to Lanling is very far, and may I add, *exhausting*!"

Song Lan went to search for his past friend's whereabouts, but nothing was heard of him again.

Chu Rong sighed, "I can already tell this story is going to be very sad.. A pity I have no tissues with me."

Wei Wuxian heaved a sigh, "If Xiao Xingchen were to be born a few years earlier, if I died a few years later, things wouldn't have had to be like this. If I were alive back then, how could I have not taken part in the matter? How could I have not made friends with such a person?"

Jiang Cheng scoffed, "Exactly, you're like two peas in a pod. Throw in some self-sacrificing shit, and you're all of a sudden relatable friends."

"..." Wei Wuxian knew that Jiang Cheng was somewhat still angry at him. But if he were to turn back time and do everything again, one thing he wouldn't change is the decision he made back then.

'Speaking of..' Wei Wuxian thought, 'Lan Zhan absolutely can't stand wrongdoings, possibly even more than Nie Huaisang's brother. Towards such a thing, he definitely wouldn't have ignored it.'

"I.." Nie Mingjue pursed his lips. "I don't know how to feel about that."

Wei Wuxian curiously asked, "Lan Zhan, why didn't you go give Xue Yang what he deserved?"

"What he deserved?" A middle-aged cultivator scoffed, "Yiling Patriarch, such a hypocrite. Did you give those wens what they deserved? No. And now you're demanding that they condemn the delinquent for slaughtering not even one-tenth of the number of people you did."

"Hypocrite?" Wei Wuxian scoffed, "What gives you the right to call me that? The true hypocrites are you so-called righteous sects."

"Wei Wuxian! How dare you!"

"He's not wrong." Yu Huizhong clicked his tongue, "Take the Jins, for example. They sheltered a murderer whose life was wanted by both the mortal and the cultivation worlds! Do you recall how Wei Wuxian was scorned, feared, and convicted? Did they shelter him after he killed a few Wens? No. And may I add, the same Wens that *you* were killing."

"...."

"But he was sheltering Wens! He was strengthening their golden cores so they could destroy the cultivation world!"

Yu Huizhong snorted, "I think he's more than capable of doing that by himself. Besides, if the 'mighty Yiling Patriarch' had an army, I think they would have been quite difficult to take down, don't you agree? It's quite perplexing as to how you killed them all so easily, especially inside the Burial Mounds, their so-called 'habitat'."

"....."

"Nothing to say? Oh, and may I add, he's still on good terms with Lady Jiang and Young Master Jin even after supposedly 'killing them'. I don't think your accusations are very accurate, you slimy bastard."

"....."

Li Daiyu whistled, "You look so innocent yet you've got the voice of a tiger. So scary."

'Oh,' he paused in his steps. 'It might have been related to those discipline whip marks.'

'It's likely he was either going through his punishment or waiting for his wounds to heal during the years when the incidents happened. No wonder he said only 'heard about' what happened.'

Wei Wuxian lowered his eyelids slightly, "Sorry Lan Zhan.."

"Not your fault," Lan Wangji brought Wei Wuxian into his arms and rested his chin on the latter's head of hair. "Wei Ying shouldn't blame himself."

"Then why did Chang Ping die afterward? Who killed the remaining members of his sect?" Wei Wuxian continued to ramble, "Did we walk too far? It's already the Chang Sect's cemetery here.."

Xue Yang mocked, "A cemetery? Which kind Young Master went out of his way to make an entire cemetery for them?"

There was suddenly a loud bang, causing the pair to startle in their tracks, "What's that sound?"

The fifty-or-so people of the YueyangChang Sect were lying in their coffins, slamming the lid from the inside. It was just like the night when they were scared to death and madly slammed on the door, waiting for a savior who never came.

Xiao Xingchen was speechless, "I..."

"Xingchen, it wasn't your fault," Song Lan spoke, "You *tried* .. And that's all that matters."

"...." Xiao Xingchen didn't know how to reply.

Wei Wuxian fell to his knees, inspecting the area, '*This was what the Wine Shop servant was talking about--Corpses slamming their coffins in the Chang Clan's cemetery!*'

'But the haunting happened ten years ago. It had long since stopped. Why did it begin again right as we arrived?'

"Maybe it sensed that Wei Wuxian was coming?"

"Right! He's the Yiling Patriarch!"

"But I think Wei Wuxian would have never asked if that was the case."

"Perhaps... It was the perpetrator! It might have been one of the two parties who messed with the corpses!"

“Good idea, old Chang!”

Lan Wangji was startled by a rustling in the trees.

'Someone's digging up a grave?!' Wei Wuxian thought.

"How disrespectful!"

"You can't just disturb someone's peace like that!"

"Hmph! Doing so would only be accumulating unwanted Karma! If you're reborn as an insect, then that's entirely your fault!"

A figure dressed in black leaped onto the roof, a sack hauled over one shoulder. After noticing Lan Wangji's swift approach with bichen, they immediately jumped to the side, efficiently deflecting each blow sent. 'Not only did the gravedigger hide his face on purpose, he even masked the sword he's using!'

"I love how Wei Wuxian is just watching on the sidelines."

"Right, just let your husband fight your battles for you haha!"

Two swords clashed. A harsh breeze swept past the two figures in the moonlight. 'Is he so well-known that he might be recognized?'

They fought for minutes on end, until the mysterious figure suddenly leaped behind Lan Wangji, startling the latter into spinning around. They continued their onslaught. 'The gravedigger's really familiar with Lan Wangji's swordsmanship!'

"Is it a Lan?"

"Impossible!" Lan Qiren huffed, "None of ours would betray us like so!"

"But... what if they were formerly in the sect? Has anyone been kicked out in the past ten-twenty years or so?"

"Hmm.." Lan Qiren stroked his goatee, "Multiple disciples were kicked out of the Sect during the war. They submitted to the Wens, and in doing so, caused great damage to the GusuLan sect. If I were in Cloud Recess, I could look through the records, but it seems that is quite unlikely due to our present situation."

"Betraying their own Sect? Cowards." Someone muttered.

Su She felt quite angered at the fact that no one immediately thought of him, yet at the same time was proud. It turns out his disguise was so great!

With a swift blow, Lan Wangji sent the other party flying backwards, and watched as their feet slid against the forest floor.

Suddenly, dark mist accumulated under their feet as many arms erupted from within the ground, firmly gripping both their feet and legs.

"That looks kinda scary."

"I second that.. It seems like something you'd see in a nightmare."

"But you've got to admit that it's a great technique."

Wei Wuxian smirked. A green light surrounded his figure, illuminating his already fiery eyes. A skilled fist hit the ground with a 'thud', "Trying to escape?"

"AHHHHHHH!" The girls screamed, putting their hands together and jumping in unison.

"Gosh, is he handsome or what?"

"I don't care if he's married anymore! I will silently admire him from the sidelines!"

"Me too, sis!"

"+1"

"+1"

"Heavens," Wen Ruohan squealed, clapping his hands. "My son is so strong! Jiayou!!"

Jiang Fengmian silently cursed him under his breath.

The hands reached and clawed at the air until the assailant smirked and stamped his foot on the ground. Wei Wuxian was clearly not far behind, as his flute was already against his lips and a single note was played.

"I want to be Lan Wangji for a day.."

"Just a day...."

"Imagine waking up to Wei Wuxian's face.. Then he greets you with a sweet smile and smothers you in kisses.. Oh my!!" The girl who spoke covered her red face with both hands.

"Mine." Lan Wangji frowned (pouted).

"Yes, yes, we know." Li Daiyu rolled her eyes. "You've got to allow us at least this much."

Fierce corpses raised from the ground, growling as they set their sights on the mysterious figure. "What a petty trick!" The gravedigger snarled, drawing their sword once again to fight the undead.

In a moment of distraction, Lan Wangji sent the bag flying from the assailant and into his arms. 'Crap!'

**"Bahahaha!" Wei Wuxian laughed, tears beginning to surface in the form of pinpricks.
"Thanks for the delivery~"**

"Wei Wuxian is so comical." Yu Huizhong chuckled.

"Right! He never fails to make me laugh." A Nie disciple added with a smile.

"Tsk!" The figure in black pulled out a talisman from within their robes and swiftly threw it before the pair.

Wei Wuxian yelled, "He's getting away!"

After a moment, he added, "Forget it. Even if we caught him, he would've found a chance to run away. Let's check out the person he dug up."

"Well, he sure changed his mind quickly." A junior commented.

As they both unwrapped the body, Wei Wuxian's face turned nauseous, "This-

Of the body, only the torso was real. All of the other parts were fake. It's used to deceive the torso into thinking that it's still attached to its owner's body.

Wei Wuxian's eyes went starry as he held up the corpse as if it were a trophy, "Can't believe this is the torso of our 'Dear friend'! We've really struck gold! We really did just run into him, haha!"

"Calm yourself, Wei Wuxian, it's just a corpse." The person who spoke, however, was chuckling.

"Don't forget, it's his 'dear friend'." Another joined in.

"He's acting like they've actually "struck gold" if you get what I mean."

"I don't think you can call that a joke, but all right, haha."

Wei Wuxian put the corpse into a qiankun pouch and spoke, "Looks like that the person who hid the corpse already noticed us investigating the incident and came to transfer the torso somewhere else in case we found it."

"Ha! I was right! It was one of the two parties!"

"You're so smart, Old Chang!"

"Of course! My great, great, great... Wait, how many "greats" was I on? ...My great, great.. Anyways, one of my grandfathers was a well-known scholar!"

"...How many grandfathers do you have?"

"Haha, none- Anyways, I was talking about my great, great, great, great grandfather. It was hundreds of years ago and he was a mortal, so I doubt he's still alive."

"Yeah, he's definitely not alive." Li Daiyu deadpanned.

"Anyways, what do you think they were trying to do?"

"Wei Wuxian said they hid it there and were trying to get it back.. I guess it's the person who killed our 'Dear friend'?"

"Good deduction! I think so too!"

"Haha!"

"No wonder the waiter said about the slamming sounds stopped in the past few years. It must have been our 'Dear friend' whose body sealed them away. But why was that gravedigger so familiar with your sect's style of attack? Hanguang-Jun, from your fight before, do you think he's someone you know really well?"

"So it turns out that Wei Wuxian has the same thoughts as us!"

"We're so smart!"

"Why is everyone so narcissistic these days.." Someone muttered.

"No," Lan Wangji affirmed.

'Lan Zhan isn't the type to hide or run away from the truth.' Wei Wuxian thought, **'If he said it's not, then it's definitely not.'**

"Awh, he's believing in Lan Wangji straight away."

"That's so cute."

"That's so heartwarming."

"That's so lovely."

"That's so cute," Jiang Cheng said in a mocking tone, "I swear to the heavens that one day I will be driven mad by children."

Wei Wuxian joked, "Sure, Jiang Cheng. Say what you wish. When you have children of your own, you'll regret your words!"

"You-" Jiang Cheng sighed, "Zewu-Jun, how do you put up with this?"

Lan Xichen let himself sigh for once, "You could say it's... *fulfilling* ."

Wei Wuxian smiled, "Alright then. Let's head back to the inn first."

"Mn,"

They arrived at the inn, much to the waiter's joy, "You're back! So how about it? Did you two see anything?"

"It's our favorite nameless man! Greetings to you!"

"Greetings, nameless man!"

"I still haven't forgotten the way you acknowledged Wangxian! It means so much to us!"

"He's right! Nameless man, my admiration for you has reached unimaginable levels!"

Yu Huizhong spoke, "You lot are talking more about the nameless man than the actual *focus* of this entire theatre performance, whatever you want to call it."

Wei Wuxian picked up his bowl of wine, "Right, where were we? Before we were interrupted by that gravedigger. I still don't know how Chang Ping died."

"Didn't the nameless man say Chang Ping was killed by Lingchi?"

"Right, Wei Wuxian, how could you forget something as important as that?"

Jiang Cheng rolled his eyes, "He forgets even the most important things. Take no notice of it."

"But Lan Wangji is the young master of the Lan sect. It's explainable that he has more information."

Lan Wangji spoke, "Many years after the incident, one day, Chang Ping and his remaining Sect members died overnight from Lingchi." Wei Wuxian took sips of wine as he listened, "In addition, Chang Ping's eyes were dug out."

"From the wounds," Lan Wangji continued, "It was verified that the sword used was the sword of Xiao Xingchen--Shuanghua."

Xiao Xingchen froze. *Shuanghua..?* It couldn't be. By this point, he was already dead. *Unless....*

Xue Yang felt a pair of eyes lock onto him and knowingly smiled.

Wei Wuxian jolted, and after a few seconds, slowly placed his cup onto the table. "The Lingchi was performed using Xiao Xingchen's sword? Then was he the one who did it?"

Lan Wangji answered, "Xiao Xingchen disappeared. There was no conclusive evidence."

"Wasn't Xiao Xingchen a well-known righteous figure like Lan Wangji? Why would he do such a thing?"

"Perhaps something happened.. Like an inner dispute."

"But at this time, Xiao Xingchen had already disappeared. Maybe he became a delinquent like Xue Yang!"

"I doubt that. Xiao Xingchen was known for destroying evil and protecting the weak. He was a rare gem in the cultivation world."

"Then.. Why would he do such a thing?"

"Revenge!" Someone concluded, "Why else would someone so righteous do such a thing? It's definitely revenge!"

"Don't force your ideals on other people." Another said, "That's something you might do, but what about Xiao Xingchen? You don't know how he thinks."

"Then is he here? Can you see him? Hey, Xiao Xingchen!" They yelled, "Why did you slaughter the Chang Clan? Please indulge me!"

"You-" A woman slapped him on the head, "Such an unfilial son! Don't do that, it embarrasses me!"

"Sorry, mom." They paused for a moment, and then yelled: "Xiao Xingchen, dude, you there?!"

Wei Wuxian asked. "Has anyone tried soul-summoning?"

Lan Wangji spoke, "Yes. Nothing was found."

"Then.. Xiao Xingchen didn't die? If his soul couldn't be summoned, then he's still alive!"

"I'm guessing lots of people thought it was Xiao Xingchen's revenge?" Wei Wuxian thoughtfully concluded, "Lan Zhan, what about you? What do you think?"

The junior who'd just spoken aloud blinked, then shriveled under the many stares received.

"One should not comment without seeing the entire picture." As Lan Wangji spoke, the waiter placed things onto the table with a well-trained customer smile, "Enjoy the meal, sir."

Lan Qiren nodded proudly, "That's my nephew."

"Lan Zhan, I only ordered five jars, but you bought five more jars for me. I'm afraid I won't be able to finish them all by myself." Wei Wuxian raised his cup with a grin, "Wanna drink with me? This isn't the Cloud Recess, so it doesn't violate anything, right?"

"Exactly my point!" Li Daiyu pointed a finger at the screen, "You Lans say 'forbidden in Cloud Recess' even though you're not *in* Cloud Recess! *Thank you* for saying that, Wei Wuxian.. Gosh ."

Lan Wangji spoke without the slightest hint of hesitation, "Very well."

Lan Qiren shook his head, and then expressionlessly facepalmed.

"Whoa, whoa, hold up a minute. Are we about to see Lan Wangji drunk?"

Wei Wuxian gasped, "You're right! Everyone look away! Look away before you regret it! This is.. This is something you definitely don't want to see!"

Lan Qiren's heart sank. Was his nephew *that* shameless when he was drunk...? *Oh gods.. Oh no..*

"Lan Zhan, you've really changed." Wei Wuxian began to pour them both a serving of wine, "Back then, I drank such a tiny jar in front of you and you got so mad. You even threw me off the wall and started fighting with me."

Li Daiyu smiled, "Ah, it feels like so long ago now.. I guess we've been here for quite a while, haven't we?"

"Mh!" Yu Huizhong agreed.

"Now, though, you're hiding jars of Emperor's smile in your room and drinking in secret."

At the reminder of his nephew privately breaking rules, Lan Qiren's expression looked constipated.

Lan Wangji spoke, "I never touched any of the Emperor's smile."

At this, Lan Qiren's heart eased a little bit.

Wei Wuxian tilted his head curiously, "Why did you hide them if you're not drinking them? Saving them for me?"

Lan Wangji simply remained silent.

Sizhui stared at his father on the screen and burst into giggles. '*A-Die, your face says everything.*'

Lan Qiren closed his eyes. Ah, he can hear his brother's voice.. Was this heaven? ..Oh, he can also hear that rogue Cangse.. Perhaps he somehow landed himself in the underworld.

Lan Xichen chuckled at his uncle's dramatic state.

Wei Wuxian sighed, "Fine, fine. You didn't touch them. I'll believe you, yeah? Drink up, drink up."

Lan Wangji instantly raised the bowl to his lips and consumed all of the contents at once.

Lan Qiren looked like a wounded puppy, "Wangji... the rules...."

"Lan Qiren?" As a doctor, Wen Qing couldn't ignore his state.

"Ah, uncle is fine." Lan Xichen rubbed his uncle's back and spoke like it was a common occurrence, "He should just be qi deviating... *how mortals do.*"

"...."

Wei Wuxian didn't bother to hide his excitement; he openly stared at Lan Wangji, anticipation in his eyes.

After a while of nothing happening, Wei Wuxian sighed, 'So Lan Zhan's this good with alcohol?'

"Wei Wuxian, at least try to be discreet about your disappointment." Jiang Cheng rubbed the bridge of his nose, making Lan Xichen send him a sympathetic smile.

"A man who can hold his liquor is a man worth marrying!"

"I expected nothing less from the great Hanguang-Jun!"

"So admirable!"

Lan Wangji faltered for a moment and he placed a hand to his face to steady himself.

Wei Wuxian cheered, "Here, here! Have some more!"

"Don't encourage him." Lan Qiren was so done with this.

"Lan-" Lan Wangji seemed to be in a daze, his eyes flitting open and shut consistently until they eventually stopped opening altogether.

After a moment, Wei Wuxian licked his dry lips and said, "He's asleep?"

".....Asleep?"

Chapter End Notes

[1] - Literally everyone knows this already, but I'll put it here anyways. Drinking Vinegar means being jealous~

[2] - The 'shan' 善 in 'Jin Guangshan' 金光善 translates to kindness, whereas 'sha' 傻 translates to fool. So he's basically calling him an idiot lol

I have no idea of who to resurrect next so I'd appreciate suggestions.

I was thinking of Wen Chao 'n his little fan group, but nah, we gotta add him at the start of the war >:)

I'd also like to clarify that Jin Guangshan is NOT dead, or, atleast, wasn't supposed to be. This happened like so many chapters ago that I can't even remember what I wrote, but I distinctly remember making it super bloody. He was gonna be healed and then just goes back to being his ugly womanizing-bastard-magnet of a self. Buttt let's just say he was killed by Madam Jin for everyone's sake ^^

Also I realized that XXC and WWX never actually met unlike how it is in CQL, so- Let's just pretend they somehow did, ok? ^^

Next Chapter: Drunk Lan Wangji!! (for real)

Yizhuang I - The present

Chapter Summary

We made it to the Yi City arc! Hooray!!

Chapter Notes

Hardest chapter I've written by far. It was tempting to call Lan Wangji cute every five seconds. He's seriously adorable tho- (>_<)

Ahhh there are so many parts from the novel that the manhua missed out!! I tried to briefly add some in without changing things but I doubt it made any difference (╥﹏╥)

I also just want to thank everyone for reading this book! We're already at 94K+ reads , 690+ bookmarks and 3.3K+ Kudos ^^\nThis has made me insanely happy (*ﾉωﾉ)

With further ado, I present to you Drunk!LWJ (*^~^*). 。.:*♡

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Wei Wuxian began to frantically wave his hand in front of Lan Wangji's face in a taunting manner, "Hanguang-Jun, Hanguang-Jun! Lan Zhan? ...er-gege!"

At the name-calling, it was as if the girls (including a few others) melted into puddles.

"Er-gege? So flirtatious, Wei Wuxian!"

"So amazingly amazing!"

"So cutely cute!"

"So adorably adorable!"

"What has happened to the cultivation world?" Jiang Cheng found himself muttering.

After receiving no response, Wei Wuxian sat in silence for a moment.

And then he startled backwards, gasping in awe. 'I! Can't! Believe! He's! Asleep!'

Nie Mingjue added after a pause, "I honestly cannot believe it either..."

"Is it genetic?" Someone asked.

"I doubt that!" Another waved their hand carelessly, "If every Lan in the clan was like this, how would they go to celebrations or sect meetings?"

"Actually, it is quite possible." Lan Xichen informed, deciding he'd join in the conversations for once, "You can burn the alcohol using your golden core-"

'Zewu-Jun!' The crowd all stared at him in awe, the Lans selectively in betrayal, *'So you've been doing that in secret this entire time?!"*

Eyes starry, Wei Wuxian placed two hands to his mouth to muffle his laughter, 'Most people get drunk before they fall asleep, so how could Lan Zhan skip the getting drunk step? But 'drunk' was exactly the step I wanted to see... Can't believe he's so bad with alcohol- Pfft!'

Lan Wangji paused, finally realizing that he'd get to witness what he does when he's drunk. Sure, he knew he'd faint after a single cup, but Wei Ying usually just went on about how he was 'cute' or 'adorable' or 'scary' instead of telling him what actually happened.

.....Oh god. He was actually going to see what happened when he was drunk.

(Lan Wangji had an inkling as to his 'drunken habits' and wasn't the least amused.)

After a while of being deep in thought, Wei Wuxian gently guided Lan Wangji's arm to rest around his neck for support as he carried him, "Could we get a room please?"

"Sure thing!" The waiter gestured to the staircase, "Follow me!"

"Nameless man, as a dear friend, I suggest you try to conceal your eagerness better in the future." Chu Rong nodded wholeheartedly, placing a hand on her chest.

The other girls in the room found themselves nodding in agreement.

"We need to actually give this guy a name."

"He can't stay 'nameless man' forever."

"What about.." Jingyi tried to keep it original, "Man with no name?!"

"...."

"...."

"Moving on,"

When Lan Wangji was finally tucked in bed, Wei Wuxian wiped his forehead with a sigh, "Phew.."

He clutched his bamboo flute with resolute eyes, '*I finally have the time to come out alone. I wonder how Wen Ning is doing..'*

"Wait, does this mean we'll see the ghost general again?"

"...Why do you sound so excited? He's super creepy and corpsey-"

"Just look over there!" Li Daiyu directed, "Did you hear him stuttering earlier? It was seriously adorable!"

"He's like a little sweet noodle," A girl giggled, "It makes my chest feel all warm and stuffy."

Wen Ning, however, was extremely flustered over the praise.

Wei Wuxian left the inn and made sure he was in a desolate place before playing a song with his flute.

There was the sound of jingling chains before Wen Ning appeared within the bushes, "Wen Ning!"

"Oh my god! It's the little noodle!"

"And he finally arrives!!!!"

Nie Huaisang continued to nod anyways, "I still don't know why you're calling the fearsome ghost general a noodle, but I guess I could join in."

"Stand." Wei Wuxian spoke, and Wen Ning complied.

"Hand." He ordered, and Wen Ning obediently put his hand onto Wei Wuxian's palm.

"Why is he so obedient?"

"Maybe it's because Wei Wuxian is there. The Ghost General is his loyal puppet, after all."

"That makes sense, but.." The boy found his eyes flitting between the screen and Wen Ning, "He seems so... different."

Wei Wuxian examined the chains with interest, 'These chains must have been made especially for restraining Wen Ning! Hah, turned to ashes? How could they have been willing?'

"Restraining him?" Lan Qiren stroked his goatee with interest.

"What does he mean by 'how could they have been willing'? someone asked.

"Hm, perhaps Wei Wuxian is talking about the way the sects didn't burn the Ghost General like they promised they would.."

"What?!"

"I died, so this is news to me!"

"Why are you guys talking about your deaths so casually?"

Jin Guangshan of the LanlingJin Sect once told the outside world that the Ghost General Wen Ning had already been turned to ashes.

"Uh oh, it's a hypocrite!" A woman yelled over the murmurs.

"Have you just realized that?" A junior disciple asked.

'With how hard they tried to restore just a fragment of the Tiger Seal, of course certain Sects also dreamed of obtaining the ghost general.' Wei Wuixan thought as he pulled out two nails from within Wen Ning's head. 'So these nails were what controlled Wen Ning.'

"He's got a point though. Sect Leader Jin informed us all of how the Ghost General was turned to ashes! But to think that he secretly coveted him behind our backs.."

"How shameless!"

"I should have cut ties with the Jin Sect long ago!"

"Hey!" Jin Ling yelled, pausing when all eyes turned to him, "...It's not like he's the Sect Leader anymore.. Don't just cut ties with us because of my grandfather.."

Jin Zixuan patted his son on the head with a smile, "So big and brave, A-Ling. You'll have everyone at your feet wanting to court you when you're older."

"A-Xuan!" Jiang Yanli chided. She didn't want to marry her precious A-Ling so soon!

"If no one wants to marry the little mistress, out of the kindness of my heart, I'll take him in!" Jingyi yelled from where he sat.[1]

"You-" Jin Ling fumed, "Who wants to marry you?!"

Jiang Yanli smiled, "That is very kind of you.. Jingyi, was it?"

"A-Niang!" Jin Ling paled. His mother wasn't really agreeing to it, right? Besides, it was a joke! Why take it so seriously?!

Wei Wuxian placed a finger to his chin in thought, 'For Wen Ning's consciousness to return completely, it'd most likely take a while. I need to find a spiritual sword to cut off his chains.'

"!!" Suddenly, Wei Wuxian felt a presence appear behind him. He quickly turned around, only to see Lan Wangji. "Lan Zhan?!"

"His detection skills are immaculate!"

"Eh? Hanguang-Jun? Why is he there?"

Lan Wangji watched him with a dark, almost warning stare which made Wei Wuxian jump in fright.

Lan Wangji paused. He had a foreboding feeling...

Wei Wuxian clutched his head as his thoughts went haywire. 'Ahhh! How long has Lan Zhan been here? Wouldn't it be awkward if he was never drunk in the beginning and followed me all the way here? I didn't mention Wen Ning at all when he was awake and snuck out as soon as he fell asleep to summon him, but was it my fault? Every day I'm together with him with no time to be alone. Wen Ning has taken the lives of the GusuLan Sect's members before. No matter how nice Lan Zhan is to me, I wouldn't have the face to summon Wen Ning in front of him. I have thick skin, but it's not this type of thick!'

"I've heard some people say 'you think too much', but I never really took it this seriously."

"Nice pun. But anyway, did you get any of that? Because I sure didn't."

"Nope, not a thing."

Wei Wuxian held out his hands in an attempt of placation, "Hanguang-Jun, hear me out..."

Lan Wangji pursed his lips before sprinting forwards and punching Wen Ning in the chest! "Leave!"

"I'm beginning to think that Lan Wangji is indeed drunk.. He's never that disrespectful, even if it is the Ghost General whom he's speaking with."

"Lan Wangji." Came a furious voice.

The said Lan froze... He was drunk at that time, what was he supposed to do?!

Wen Qing pursed her lips with a glare, "And for what purpose did you hit A-Ning?"

Lan Wangji felt his lips were quite dry. He licked them before saying, "I...."

"Apologise to A-Ning, and then maybe I could forgive you."

Lan Wangji helplessly bowed, "My apologies, Young Master Wen.. I... I was out of line."

Flustered, Wen Ning helplessly waved his hands, "It- It's okay, Lan- Lan-er-gongzi, re-really! Wen Ning... Isn't angry!"

"A-Ning, you should at least say a few insults to him," Wen Qing sighed, "Lan Wangji, you're lucky my didi is so forgiving."

Wei Wuxian paused, '*Something feels off..*'

"How come everyone just *knows* when something is off..? By the time I notice, my left arm is about *two li* away!"

Many people chuckled at the story.

Lan Wangji pushed Wen Ning away once again, and Wei Wuxian's eyes briefly dropped to Lan Wangji's feet, '*Hm? He wore his shoes on opposite feet?*'

"Hanguang-Jun... made such a mistake?!" Jingyi gaped in awe.

"He's drunk, you idiot," Jin Ling rolled his eyes, "Do you seriously expect him to look all prim and proper under the effects of intoxication?"

Wei Wuxian then held out two fingers and asked, "...Hanguang-Jun, what number is this?"

Bichen clattered to the ground, and Lan Wangji suddenly grabbed Wei Wuxian's fingers with his hands, pulling them apart. There was a silence.

"My heart..." someone gasped.

"So cute... too cute! Too cute for this lowly one's feeble heart!"

"Hanguang-Jun, Wei Wuxian, please allow me to build a shrine in your honor!"

"Yes! I will surely visit it each day!"

"Me too!"

"+1!"

"+1!"

Wei Wuxian paled, 'This definitely isn't the normal Lan Zhan!'

"No shit.." Jiang Cheng muttered.

"Hanguang-Jun, are you drunk?"

"No."

"A drunk man never admits when he is drunk.." Old Liu wisely said, "And a sober man never admits when he is sober."

"...."

"...Ok."

Wei Wuxian picked up Bichen as he thought, 'I've had countless drinking buddies and I've seen thousands of drinking antics.' He placed the sword on his back , 'But it's the first time I've seen someone like Lan Wangji who doesn't make a fuss at all and holds up a straight face while doing weird acts.'

"Weird acts." Su She couldn't help but scoff, "Lan Wangji is always weird."

Trying not to laugh, Wei Wuxian spoke, "Okay, let's go back."

They began to walk away from the woods when Lan Wangji spotted Wen Ning following close behind. He smacked the fierce corpse again and yelled, "Go away!"

Wen Qing found herself staring daggers into a certain Lan.

Wen Ruohan whistled, "Already making sure you and Ying'er are alone.. You're truly my son-in-law, Lan Wangji!"

Beside him, Li Daiyu inhaled a sharp breath, "He's jealous? He's actually jealous? When Lan Wangji is drunk, he gets jealous? But that could only mean.. Oh god, Wei Wuxian is in for it. What's gonna happen? Now that Lan Wangji is drunk, there's no turning back. God knows how long will pass until he finally wakes up. Maybe they'll finally k...kiss. Oh my golly gosh.. HEAVENS, they're gonna kiss! They're actually gonna kiss! And maybe get married while they're at it... Anyways, this is VERY exciting and I feel like my world is getting brighter. Chu Rong, if my mother ever asks you why I'm praying every single day, tell her I've found my God!"

"....." Chu Rong spoke after a long pause, "Calm down.. my guy Lan Wangji has just appeared. Give him and Wei Wuxian some time."

"...Right, I feel like Wei Wuxian is influencing you a bit much.. Just tone down your thoughts a bit."

Wei Wuxian helplessly sighed, "Okay, okay. It's up to you. I'll make him go away if that's what you want."

Wei Wuxian placed the bamboo flute to his lips and began to play. When he played the first note, however, Lan Wangji snatched the flute out of his hand.

"I-"

"Wangji!" Lan Qiren finally yelled. He was so done.

"Sorry, uncle!" Lan Wangji bowed, "Wangji is willing to be punished!"

"Lan Zhan!" Wei Wuxian helplessly called.

Upon seeing Wei Wuxian's obvious confusion, Lan Wangji added, "Do not play for him."

Lan Xichen locked his palms together with a smile. *Ah, Wangji is truly adorable.*

"Why are you so pushy?" Wei Wuxian asked.

"Do not play for him." Lan Wangji repeated.

'Lan Zhan has never been too fond of demonic techniques, so maybe he doesn't like the way I use my flute to control Wen Ning. Gotta pet him in the direction his fur goes!'

"Go away." Jingyi held up his hands in defeat, "I'm done. Zizhen, you can take over my role as Xue Yin's guardian."

"I think you mean Xue Yang.."

"Really?!" Ouyang Zizhen beamed, "Then can you pass me the ropes--"

"Of course not!" Lan Jingyi snapped, "You think I'd give up this post so easily?! Keep dreaming, you impudent puppy!"

"Then why-..."

"....."

"Fine. I'll only play for you, right?" Wei Wuxian appealed.

"Mn."

"That's adorable!" Yu Huizhong cooed. Chu Rong nodded in agreement.

"Denial is unhealthy," Wen Ruohan nodded at his own words, "But jealousy is okay... perfectly okay."

Without his flute to act as a medium, Wei Wuxian could only whistle. He told Wen Ning, "Keep on hiding. Make sure nobody finds you."

Wen Ning looked like he wanted to refute but was scared Lan Wangji would hit him again. He obediently turned around and began to walk away.

Li Daiyu heaved a sigh, "Poor noodle."

"Yeah," Yu Huizhong nodded sadly, "Poor noodle.."

Wen Qing found herself enveloping Wen Ning in a hug, "Poor A-Ning, my precious didi. If Lan Wangji hits you again, tell JieJie and she will beat him up for you, okay?"

Wen Ning nodded with a timid smile, "Mn!"

When they arrived back at the inn, Wei Wuxian cupped his face with a hand and stared at Lan Wangji with amusement, "Lan Zhan, why don't you even blush when you're drunk?"

Caught off guard, Lan Wangji suddenly grabbed Wei Wuxian by the hand and pulled him into his chest. Wei Wuxian made an incoherent sound of shock which was muffled by the white robes his face was slammed into.

The girls were clearly ecstatic, judging by Nie Huaisang's wails of "Li-Guniang, my ears!!" Jiang Cheng could faintly see his A-Jie trying to suppress a grin--What the heck is she doing-

"Oh my," Wei Wuxian slumped into Lan Wangji's arms, "Lan Zhan, your poor wife is suddenly feeling cold. Warm him up a bit, would you?"

"Mn, will warm up Wei Ying." Lan Wangji enveloped Wei Wuxian within his large white sleeves and held him tightly as they sat in silence.

"Listen to the heartbeats," Lan Wangji said. Wei Wuxian's eyes widened.

"What?"

"The face does not show anything. Listen to the heartbeats." Lan Wangji clarified.

"Listen to the heartbeats.." Wei Wuxian absentmindedly poked his husband's chest, "...Lan Zhan, your heart is beating fast even now. Do you love this Wei Ying that much?"

"Mn," Lan Wangji nodded, "...My heart will always beat for Wei Ying."

Wei Ying squealed before burying his face in white robes.

Wei Wuxian listened with something akin to interest, '*His heart does seem to be beating a little fast..*'

"Wei Wuxian, are you being serious?" Jiang Cheng uttered, "ARE YOU FUCKING SERIOUS?!"

"Aish, Jiang Cheng, don't shout.. you'll disturb poor XianXian's rest." Wei Wuxian pouted, "I realize how stupid I sounded now, but how was I supposed to know?! Lan Zhan was always mean to me!"

"!!" Lan Wangji frowned, "Sorry Wei Ying."

"I'm not blaming you, Lan Zhan! ...After all, it's my fault for being so oblivious.."

"Mn."

"Wha- Lan Zhan, you're not supposed to agree with that!"

Wei Wuxian removed himself from Lan Wangji's embrace and asked, "I won't be able to tell from your face unless I listen to your heartbeats?"

"Mn."

The majority of the room had stars in their eyes. They watched the screen with adoration--almost pleading eyes. *Who knew Lan Wangji could be so adorable?!*

**He then fell into Lan Wangji's arms once again, but this time with a cunning smirk,
'Lan Zhan's drunk! And he's drunk in such a fun way! Wouldn't it be a waste if I don't
tease him?'**

Jiang Yanli chuckled, "A-Xian, always such a troublemaker."

Wei Wuxian pouted, "Shijie! Xianxian is a good boy!"

"Really?" Jiang Yanli looked amused, "But Xianxian didn't invite shijie to his wedding!"

Wei Wuxian dramatically gasped, "Oh no! Xianxian will get married again! And that way shijie can come!"

Lan Wangji agreed, "Mn." He liked the sound of that.

Jiang Yanli flicked Wei Wuxian on the nose, incurring a small "such a child.." from Jin Ling.

Wei Wuxian allowed Lan Wangji's arms to wrap around his waist and gingerly used a finger to tilt up the other's chin, "What are you looking at me for? Am I pretty?"

Lan Wangji resolutely answered, "Mn."

Wen Ruohan was speechless.

The girls were speechless.

Lan Qiren broke the silence with a small, "Wangji..."

Wei Wuxian released a small chuckle, "Hanguang-Jun, are you gonna do whatever I tell you to do?"

"Mn."

"Answer whatever question I ask?"

"Mn."

"Alright.." Wei Wuxian's eyes flashed with amusement, "Then let me ask you. Have you ever... Secretly tasted the Emperor's Smile hidden in your room?"

"No."

Lan Qiren heaved a sigh of relief, "Wangji, you're truly my best student."

"Do you like rabbits?"

"Yes."

"I mean, we all know that already judging by the way he so gladly received Wei Wuxian's bunnies as a present."

"But it's cute!"

"I know, right! Just imagine such a cold-faced man holding a bundle of cute rabbits.. It's adorable!"

"Have you violated any rules?"

"Yes."

"Ack.." Although Lan Qiren already knows of the ways his nephew has violated the rules, hearing it firsthand pained his heart.

"Have you ever liked someone?"

"Yes."

Lan Qiren muttered gloomily, "Don't remind me."

"Eh?" A girl questioned, "Why is Wei Wuxian not surprised?"

Yu Huizhong lamented, "To Wei Wuxian, 'Like' probably means eating Lotus seeds together... Good grief."

Wei Wuxian muffled his laughter with a hand, '*So he really does answer whatever question I ask, huh? Then now we can cut to the chase..*'

"Oho?" Wen Ruohan smirked, "Cut to the chase, eh?"

"What do you think of Jiang Cheng?"

Wen Ruohan sighed in disappointment, "Son you're supposed to be asking about the important things, not... *Jiang Wanyin*."

Lan Wangji's expression went dark, "Hm."

"Wow, thank you very much Lan Wangji." Jiang Cheng sarcastically said, "Well, fuck you too."

"What about Wen Ning?"

Lan Wangji looked uninterested, "Huh."

"Hey!" Chu Rong protested, "Our cute noodle of a ghost general shouldn't be dismissed like that!"

"Right! He needs to be loved, coddled, and respected!"

Although the girls were being rather dramatic, Wen Qing couldn't help but agree.

Wei Wuxian grinned and pointed to himself, "What about this one?"

Lan Wangji replied, "Mine."

There was a collection of gasps around the room.

"ACK!" Someone choked, breaking the silence, "I inhaled too much. Please continue."

"Mine..?" Wen Ruohan looked like he was ascending to heaven.

Even Jiang Yanli let out a small, "Oh, A-Xian.."

"Mi. Ne." He repeated, articulately punctuating the word with sincerity.

This time, however, the crowd was in an uproar.

"Don't get too excited," Jiang Cheng scoffed, "I bet you that Wei Wuxian will make some kind of excuse to say that what Lan Wangji just said wasn't some pent-up confession."

Chu Rong snorted, "Rephrase that, Sect Leader Jiang. I didn't understand a word you just said."

"In other words," Yu Huizhong spoke up, "Wei Wuxian is going to do some bullshitting to convince himself that Lan Wangji isn't totally head-over-heels, which, may I add, he totally is."

"Hmph!" Li Daiyu crossed her arms, "How are you so sure about that? Wei Wuxian could just be in denial, for all you know."

"I've known him since I was a child," Jiang Cheng rolled his eyes, "Gosh, he didn't even realize that a group of girls were crushing on him back in Yunmeng when they sent him homemade gifts each day. It took a lot of convincing from me and my sister to get it in his thick head that 'like' and 'love' are two different things."

"Holy shit, that's bad." Li Daiyu shook her head in astonishment.

"Why are you acting like you're experienced in love, Sect Leader Jiang?" Chu Rong added, "I bet every person you dated rejected you!"

"Eh? How'd you know that?" Wei Wuxian asked, and then added with a giggle, "Jiang Cheng went on three blind dates one time! He was too scary so all the maidens blacklisted him!"

Jiang Cheng blankly stared at nothing.

Lan Xichen gave him a comforting pat on the back.

"Huh?" Wei Wuxian tilted his head in question before pointing to Lan Wangji's sword, which was still on his back. "You mean Bichen?"

The silence was so quiet that you could hear the small shuffling of robes and someone writing on a talisman.

"I..." Li Daiyu wanted to smash her head into the wall, "I'm done."

"Told you so." Jiang Cheng wasn't the least surprised by this outcome.

Jin Zixun was too shocked to even say his favorite catchphrase- 'stupid cutsleeves.'

Lan Xichen sighed. *Wangji, my poor didi, how you've suffered.*

'Lan Zhan is this obsessed with his sword?' Wei Wuxian stepped down from the bed and shifted Bichen from side to side, watching as Lan Wangji's eyes 'followed' the weapon.

"I am so done with this man." Nie Huaisang raised his hands in defeat, "Wei-Xiong, aren't you supposed to be smart?"

Wei Wuxian flicked his note and mumbled, "So you're saying I'm not smart anymore? Nie-Xiong, so rude."

He held out the sword with a smile, "You want it?"

"This guy is-"

"How can someone be so dense?"

"Isn't he supposed to be the Yiling Patriarch?"

"STOP!" Chu Rong interrupted, "This is too much! I can't.."

Everyone else found themselves sharing her thoughts.

Lan Wangji grabbed Wei Wuxian's hand, pulling him closer, "I want it.."

"Ahh! Lan Wangji is too cute like this!"

"I... I completely agree." Wen Ruohan nodded at his own words, "Truly an amazing son-in-law!"

"Dude," Jiang Fengmian clicked his tongue, "Stop calling A-Xian your child, he's Cangse's and Changze's."

"Even better!" Wen Ruohan laughed, "Changze, that romantic boy. Ah, and the little rogue Cangse. Times were truly fun back then."

Lan Qiren scoffed, "Yeah, maybe for you. But for others, it was most certainly *not*."

"Eh?" Someone finally spoke up, "You guys are childhood friends?"

"That we are!" Wen Ruohan spoke as Lan Qiren spat, "We are not!"

**Wei Wuxian found himself turning a bright shade of red, '*Oh heavens, this is too much!*
If he were this honest, this bold to a girl, what a formidable man he'd be!'**

"You say that like you're not already enraptured." Li Daiyu deadpanned.

"Wei-Xiong.. You can be really dense sometimes." Nie Huaisang buried his face in his hands.

**His blush long subsided, Wei Wuxian asked, "Lan Zhan, how did you know it was me?
Why did you help me?"**

Lan Wangji opened his mouth, only to whisper a few incoherent words.

"Wei Ying~" Li Daiyu yelled, deliberately dragging out the words, "I helped you~ because you're cu~te,"

Nie Huaisang gasped, "Bro, that actually rhymes." He paused. "Let me try."

"Wei-Xiong~, you're super dense~ It doesn't make sense~"

The room soon became a parade of "oo~" "ee~" "aaa". The noises even began to sound like fierce corpses, much to everyone's bewilderment.

Jiang Cheng was confused. "Excuse me, what the fuck?"

Wei Wuxian moved his head closer to hear the words more clearly, "Hm?"

Wen Ruohan sighed dreamily, "Why I know that they won't kiss, I can't help but wish it would happen."

Ouyang Zizhen interrupted, "How do you know that they won't? And why do you wish it would happen like so?"

Xue Yang spoke, "The great *Wen Ruohan* has fallen from grace. The rest of him is just *dying* to see the fearsome Yiling Laozu and righteous Hanguang-Jun consummate their marriage."

Ouyang Zizhen laughed in disbelief, "I heard he was some big shot with a temper so thin that you'd see someone's head flying every two seconds. What happened?"

"What Xue Yang said sounds unbelievable, but he's dead serious." Jingyi added, and then froze, "I just did that. Oh no."

"Guess I'm rubbing off on you, kid." Xue Yang chuckled with amusement.

"Lan Zhan?!" Lan Wangji swiftly pulled Wei Wuxian by the arm and they both tumbled onto the bed. The candle went out, the room was once again dark.

Wen Ruohan covered his eyes and squealed, "Guess they're consummating their marriage a bit early!"

Wen Qing spoke after a long pause, "Remind me why I'm still sitting near you."

Lan Wangji had Wei Wuxian pinned under him, his robes and hair wild and in disarray.

"Uhm, I'm just gonna... You know... Look away.." A girl covered her face with her hands.

"Aish!" Li Daiyu grinned, "Girl, I can see your fingers separating! Don't act all timid!"

Jiang Yanli smiled, "Why I love you, A-Xian, it would be a bit inappropriate for me to see this." She turned around, much to Wei Wuxian's despair.

"Shijie!! It's not like that!! Lan Zhan and I.. You won't have to see that!" He added after a pause, "Yet.."

Wen Qing finally said, "Why am I watching this ludicrous display? Wei Wuxian, if you're going to be doing the 'forbidden loquat'-as you call it, then please be private about it. I'd rather not let A-Ning see such a thing."

"Wha-" Wei Wuxian was flabbergasted, "This isn't my doing! If anything, you guys are the ones voluntarily watching this! ..I! Had! Nothing to do with it!" He heaved; his face now an angry pout.

Jiang Cheng pretended to vomit, "Trust me, I'd rather not see this either."

"Lan Zha-" As Wei Wuxian tried to sit up, Lan Wangji pressed a pressure point on his waist, freezing the former in place.

'Again?!" Wei Wuxian internally cried as he tumbled backwards into the bed.

Lan Wangji watched in terror. Had he taken advantage of Wei Ying?! Had he-

Lan Wangji himself slipped inside, pulling the covers up to tuck them both in. "It is nine. Rest."

'So this is the scary bedtime routine of the GusuLan clan at work!'

Lan Wangji then heaved a sigh of relief. He hadn't, hooray.

Wei Wuxian's entire body was shaking, "Lan Zhan, remove it. I bought two rooms, we don't have to be crammed into the same bed."

Lan Wangji shifted his hand under the covers, searching for the tie to Wei Wuxian's sash.

Lan Wangji paled once again.

"Lan Wangji!" Jiang Cheng snapped, "If you dared to take advantage of my brother, then I'll..."

"Now, now, Sect Leader Jiang." Lan Xichen placated, "I'm sure Wangji was just trying to make Wei-Gongzi feel comfortable. Take no notice of it."

Wei Wuixan sent Lan Xichen a thumbs up across the room.

When Lan Wangji finally reached the tie, he tried to pull a pale Wei Wuxian's robes apart, who in turn bellowed, "Okay, yes! I'm lying, I'm sleeping! Enough alright, I didn't mean this kind of remove it! I finally know why alcohol is banned in your sect!"

The words, "I finally know why alcohol is banned in your sect!" made Lan Xichen lightly chuckle, as he recalled being told about his own drunken habits. [2]

"Shh." Lan Wangji placed a hand over Wei Wuxian's mouth, successfully preventing him from complaining any further.

Wei Wuxian quietly mourned to himself, 'Ever since I came back, every time I wanted to tease Lan Wangji like before, it always ended up being me digging up my own grave.'

'That shouldn't be right! Where did I go wrong?!"

"Firstly, you're dense. Secondly, Lan Wangji is (sadly) not merely bold enough when sober, and thirdly, you're dense--"

Nie Huaisang spoke, "Um, ...Li-Guniang, I think you said dense twice."

"Ah, did I? I guess I didn't notice." She definitely did.

The next morning, at five, Wei Wuxian found himself shuffling around as he uncomfortably tugged on his robes, which had clung to his body due to the heat and sweat. 'When two people are in the same bed, it's really hot!'

"I have a foreboding feeling..." someone muttered.

Wei Wuxian pulled his robes off and glanced to Lan Wangji, who was beside him, 'Doesn't Lan Zhan feel uncomfortable all covered up?'

'Nevermind,' Wei Wuxian smiled as he began to untie the other's robes, 'Lan Zhan's drunk. Let me be a good person.'

"....."

Jiang Cheng said, "?????????"

Wei Wuxian gasped, "Jiang Cheng, how did you say that?"

"How are you so—" Jiang Cheng shook his head. "Forget it. How are you even a Jiang?"

Suddenly, he caught sight of a certain brandmark on Lan Wangji's chest. His curiosity piqued, he stopped what he was doing in favor of staring at it.

Lan Wangji woke up to Wei Wuxian towering over him, both their chests uncovered.

Lan Qiren made a strangled noise in his throat.

He immediately pushed Wei Wuxian away and ungracefully tumbled off the bed in a fit of robes. His eyes wide in shock, he spoke, "You...!"

Wei Wuxian tilted his head in confusion, uncaring whether his chest was bare for all to see, "Me?"

"Wow," Someone commented, staring at Wei Wuxian's chest, "Compared to the malnourishment Mo Xuanyu endured, Wei Wuxian has really... *built some muscle.*"

"Lady, don't you have a husband?"

"Right!" Another added, "You can tell Lan Wangji has fed him well! Such a doting man, that he is!"

Lan Wangji's ears were bright red, and his cheeks were a suspicious shade of pink, "Last night, I..."

"His ears are red! So cute!"

"+1!"

Wei Wuxian sheepishly pulled the covers over his body, coquettishly batting his eyelashes like a nervous maiden, "You were so bold last night, Hanguang-Jun."

Lan Wangji blanked out.

Lan Qiren looked ready to wither away.

"Uncle, how's your heart?" Lan Xichen asked, then added, "Bad question. Uncle, although your heart is extremely pained, how's your mindset? Do you need to spit blood again?"

Meanwhile, the girls were in hysterics.

"Bahahaha! Wei Wuxian, you little mongrel!"

"Lan Wangji looks like his soul has left his body!"

Wei Wuxian nervously (deliberately) blinked his eyelashes, "Eh..? Lan Zhan.. Didn't like it? He didn't find it alluring?"

He was suddenly engulfed in two strong arms, "Wei Ying is cute."

"Huh?" Wei Wuxian's face turned bright red.

"Wei Ying is pretty." Lan Wangji continued, "Wei Ying is adorable. Wei Ying is cute. Wei Ying is lovely. Wei Ying is Wei Ying. Wei Ying is mine--"

"We get it, we're single." Yu Huizhong rolled his eyes.

"Right," Chu Rong added, "No need to remind me!"

The screen switched to Wei Wuxian and Lan Wangji walking in the wild, the former cheerfully pointing behind himself as he spoke, "This path should be the direction the left arm of our 'Dear friend' pointed us towards!"

"The way he just--*completely* forgot about that entire incident is utterly laughable."

"Show some more respect for Lan Wangji's monstrous self-restraint."

"Heavens. How this boy survived being so oblivious, I wonder."

"I heard from villagers that this place is called 'Yi City'." Wei Wuxian continued, "Most of the people in this city died early, some having short lives and others dying by accident. In the city, there are many coffin homes for keeping corpses. Along with how their specialty is making coffins, paper money, and other Burial Goods, they ended up getting this name." [3]

Lan Wangji had a gloomy atmosphere surrounding him, which didn't go unnoticed to Wei Wuxian. The latter gently patted him on the shoulder with a grin, "Hanguang-Jun, wake up! I only took off our clothes. It was only a joke. Your chastity is still here and you haven't been tainted, don't worry!"

Lan Wangji sighed. It wasn't *his* chastity that he was afraid had been tainted..

"Wei Wuxian, you've traumatized the poor man!"

"Right! Have some sympathy and show a bit of lenience!"

Lan Wangji appeared to be more relieved, yet still uncertain, "Last right, apart from taking your flute, did I..."

Wei Wuxian gave him a sunny smile, "You? You mean what else did you do? Nothing much. You said a bunch of things though."

"Wei-Gongzi..." Lan Xichen slowly exhaled a heavy sigh.

"...Sorry, Zewu-Jun," Wei Wuxian added after a pause, "Sorry, Lan Zhan."

Lan Wangji spoke, "Wei Ying is not to blame. He didn't know."

"...." Lan Wangji, the poor man, looked terrified, "...Such as?"

Wei Wuxian grinned, "Nothing too important. Such as, hmm, for example, that you really like.."

Lan Wangji paled.

"That you really like rabbits!" Wei Wuxian finished, pointing a finger.

"Stop teasing him!" The girl who had spoken paused, and then added, "...Is what I want to say.."

"....."

"Don't look at me like that!" She smoothly defended herself, "It's Lan Wangji's fault for being so cute!"

"But he looks so... traumatized..."

"Yeah, he probably thinks Wei Wuxian found out about his little teenage crush!"

"Oh deary me, this boy is so pitiful. First waiting for what, thirteen years? And now having to suffer under his crush's dense tendencies.. truly pitiful, that he is."

Li Daiyu commented, "Couldn't have said it better."

"Don't worry! Rabbits are so cute. Who doesn't like rabbits?" He said, even as he hysterically laughed, "I like them too--I like to eat them, hahahahaha!"

Lan Wangji's ears were bright red.

"And he goes and says that about Lan Wangji's favorite pet." Wen Ruohan couldn't help but wetly chuckle, "Son, you're very amusing at times."

After his laughter had receded a bit, Wei Wuxian grabbed Lan Wangji's hand and cheerily trotted forwards, "Come on, come on, Hanguang-Jun. Let's see which of our 'Dear Friend's body parts we'd run into this time."

"So, I guess we've just accepted the fact that a practically limbless corpse is a dear friend? Okay. Great."

Nie Huaisang couldn't help but snort.

As the pair stood before the gate, Wei Wuxian added, "It's got terrible Feng Shui."

The crowd couldn't help but agree, "Terrible Feng Shui."

Lan Wangji added, "Barren mountains and turbulent rivers."

The gates opened with a squeak and Wei Wuxian peered inside with confusion, "Nobody's there?"

'If someone takes advantage of the fog and sneaks between us two, there's really no guarantee either of us would notice.'

"If someone dared to attack wangxian, they'd lose their neck before they even knew it. Courtesy to me, of course."

"..I can't shake off the feeling that Wei Wuxian is digging his own grave my saying that.."

The screen showed the dark figures of Wei Wuixan and Lan Wangji, before there was the sound of feet tapping on the floor and a swift presence sprinted towards the two. 'It's so fast!'

"I called it! Wei Wuxian truly did dig his, or rather *their* own graves!"

"Who the actual fuck is it this time?"

"I bet 10 on Su Shit!"

"15 on Jin Guangyao!"

"10 on another nameless person!"

Lan Wangji's eyes burned a molten gold as he unsheathed Bichen and sent it towards the assailant using spiritual energy. "Pay attention. Be careful."

"The way Lan Wangji automatically protects Wei Wuxian like this is so beautiful that words can't even begin to describe it."

"I second that! Had I been in Wei Wuxian's shoes, I'd be the one asking Lan Wangji to marry me every second!"

"Like you're not already doing that." Someone muttered.

Wei Wuxian yelled, "That thing's running too fast! It's no speed a human can reach!"

"That 'thing' is probably using talismans to boost its speed."

"Very logical solution, shidi. However, the real question is.. *who* or *what* exactly is it?"

He then asked, "Did you hear that?"

Lan Wangji nodded in reply. "Footsteps. A bamboo pole."

A-Qing's eyes widened. *A bamboo pole?*

Xiao Xingchen sent a subtle glance to Xue Yang.

"That's right. It sounds like a bamboo pole quickly tapping on the ground, but why would a sound like this-

At the sound of tapping feet once again, Wei Wuxian pulled a talisman from within his robes and spoke, "A second round?!"

"Can you just, like, get lost, you coward?"

"He's right! If you're too afraid of revealing yourself, then just get lost or something!"

Upon sensing the killing intent, Wei Wuxian frowned, "Hm? This one looks a bit different.."

A sword came flying in their direction, and Lan Wangji once again unsheathed Bichen to counter it. The sound of swords clashing filled the empty silence of the misty area.

"Hey! Who is it?!" A voice yelled from within the distance.

"Eh? That voice sounds familiar.."

"You're right! It sounds like that little peacock.. What was the kid's name again..? Jin Lan? Jin Lin? Oh wait, that's right, Jin Ling!"

"But what's a little young master like him doing there?"

"Uh, maybe doing cultivator-ey stuff, y'know, because he's a cultivator?"

"....."

"Huh?! The sword looks kinda familiar!" Another added.

"Jingyi?" Sizhui muttered, and then beamed, "Jingyi, Zizhen, Jin Ling, it's us!"

"Eh?" Lan Jingyi blinked, "Me? I'm there?"

Jin Ling scoffed, "How did you not recognize your own voice? So stupid..."

"Right!" Ouyang Zizhen chirped, "We were investigating too, remember? This was when I first met Senior Wei!"

Wei Wuxian paused, '*The voices sound somewhat familiar.. Could it be..?*'

"Jin Ling? Sizhui?" He asked.

The fog cleared up, and the figures of the junior disciples were shown, ecstatic at the pair's presence.

Jin Ling didn't bother hiding his disdain, "Why is it you again?"

"A-Ling," Jin Zixuan lightly pulled on his son's cheek, "Don't. Be. Rude. To. Every. Person. You. Meet!"

Jin Ling pulled away with a pout, lightly rubbing his red cheek, "Why not? I feel like I'm the only sensible one out of them idiots... excluding Sizhui."

Jiang Yanli chuckled, "Then as the 'smarter' one, A-Ling, you should *guide* them."

"...I guess," Jin Ling tried to hide his flushed cheeks, "Maybe I could help them a little bit.. Just a little bit, though?"

Jiang Yanli stroked her son's hair with a smile, "Of course, A-Ling."

Sizhui sounded ecstatic, "You are here too, Young Master Mo? Then is Hanguang-Jun here as well?"

Wei Wuxian pouted, "It hurts to hear my little radish call us 'Gongzi' and 'Hanguang-Jun' again.."

Lan Yuan deflated, "Sorry, A-Niang.."

"Aish, it's not your fault! Don't apologize!" Wei Wuxian quickly coaxed.

"Hanguang-Jun has to be here!" Jingyi shouted, "The sword from before was definitely Bichen, right?"

Chapter End Notes

[1] "If no one wants to marry the little mistress, out of the kindness of my heart, I'll take him in," Jingyi said that as a joke, dw I'm not making them get married lol

[2] According to the author, when Lan Xichen gets drunk, he becomes so excited that every sentence he speaks ends with three exclamation marks.

[3] 'Yi' comes from the word 'Yizhuang', which means coffin home.

You can tell I was hyper when I wrote this
I'm sorry *runs away*

Next Chapter: Adventures of Yi City!

Yizhuang II - The present

Chapter Summary

Wei Wuxian and Lan Wangji meet up w/ the juniors!

Chapter Notes

Guys let's all say thank you to Lun Sang for this chapter (シ__シ
I wrote this at 1 in the morning, so.. an F to my sleep

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"Why are you all here?" Wei Wuxian spoke, "That was such a ruthless attack. Good thing I have Hanguang-Jun with me, or else what if you hurt an ordinary person?"

"So righteous.." someone whispered.

"Hanguang-Jun.." another spoke. "He's a grabber, Wei Wuxian. Don't let him go,"

"Despite his resting bitchface, I suppose Hanguang-Jun is.. *quite adequate* ."

"Bro, whose side are you on?!"

"Nah, but you can't deny that Sect Leader Jiang is the one with the resting bitchface." another nodded at their own words.

"Dude, what the hell?!" One girl yelled, "Why do you like Lan Wangji?! He never even protected Wei Wuxian! I heard that he even *fought* Wei Wuxian in the bloodbath at Nevernight!"

Lan Wangji froze.

"Again with the *bloodbath*," Wen Ruohan heaved , "Just what *happened* at Nevernight after I died, bro?"

"Dude!? Why would you even *think* of liking Jiang Cheng?!" A second girl rebuked, "He had the opportunity to support Wei Wuxian! He had an entire sect under him! But did he? No!"

Jiang Cheng felt like spitting blood.

"Bro, bro, bro, hold on a second. I bet you my next lunch that if Jiang Cheng had a ponytail, you'd be kneeling before him! People would cry at how handsome he looks!"

Jiang Cheng unconsciously touched his hair. What was wrong with his bun?

"Now now, girlies," Wen Ruohan chuckled. "It seems that Jiang Wanyin has a little fan base now. My son will be getting a sister-in-law, meaning that I will also be getting a daughter-in-law! Ahahaha!"

Everyone went silent at that. Wen Ruohan's weirdness never failed to break the atmosphere, whether positive or negative.

Jin Ling spoke, "I, those ones from the Lan Sect, and a few from other sects came here chasing after something. I came from Qinghe."

"And we from Langya," Jingyi added.

Wei Wuxian asked, "Chasing after something? After what?"

Jingyi gasped, "Senior Wei! I never noticed back then, but you totally ignored me, didn't you! You didn't even spare me a glance!!"

Jin Ling shrugged, not too surprised. "Uncle- I mean- Wei Wuxian tends to ignore everyone and everything when he's deep in thought."

"Let me finish that for you!" Li Daiyu chirped, "Un-cle!"

"A-Ling," Jiang Yanli gently squeezed her son's cheeks. "A-Xian is my brother, as well as your uncle. There's no need to be shy."

"W- Who's shy?!" Jin Ling huffed.

Lan Sizhui spoke after a pause, "I do not know.. It never showed its face."

'Someone was leading them to Langya on purpose?'

"Which one of the two groups do you think did it?"

Jiang Cheng rested his head in his hands. "You lot are betting *again* ?"

Old Liu stroked his beard, "Hmmm... I think it's the one who attacked them.."

Old Cheng hummed in thought, "Old Liu, why do you think that?"

"Well, you see, I'm quite good at guessing-"

Another old man rolled his eyes, "It's obviously the person trying to show them where the body parts are. After all, why else would they lead... *wangxian*, is it? to such a place?"

"Very good!" Old Cheng nodded in agreement, "Very good, old Li!"

The sound of a bamboo pole knocking on the ground had all of the juniors on edge, "It's here again!"

"Oh dear," Wen Ruohan shook his head sadly, "Please be safe, little ducklings. If you died, I wouldn't have any face left when arguing with Qing-er!"

"Qing-er? Who's that?" Yu Huizhong asked.

"Qing-er is my dear.. *granddaughter* , Wen Qing."

Said Wen Qing raised an eyebrow. What?

"Ah! I see!" Yu Huizhong nodded in understanding. "Do you argue often?"

"We do," Wen Ruohan sighed sadly, "My cute grandson, NingNing, is the only one who listens to me!"

Wen Ning fumbled over his words, "S- Sect Leader! W- Wen Ning is- is grateful!"

"Awh, so cute." Wen Ruohan cooed.

"So, are everyone you're grandchildren then?" Yu Huizhong asked.

"No, no!" Wen Ruohan replied, "People like.. Lan Qiren, for example, are far too old! They're more like my brothers, aha!"

There was a yell of "You-" which was followed by "Shameless!"

Sizhui exclaimed, "Here again... Just how long is it going to follow us for?!"

Wei Wuxian asked, "It's been following you?"

"The sound has been following us ever since we came in."

"Guys, who wants to bet on it being an admirer? Maybe they're too nervous to confront them, so they're playing chase instead!"

"Me!"

"I bet 20!"

"10!"

"13!"

"An admirer?" Jingyi nodded in understanding, "I see."

Jin Ling scoffed, "Before you get any ideas, they aren't talking about you."

Jingyi paused. He'd definitely been thinking that!

"If it *was* a stalker, they'd most likely be following Sizhui. After all, he *is* Sizhui."

A light pink dusted Lan Yuan's cheeks. He'd never been praised so openly before.

"Besides," Jin Ling continued, "It's not even an admirer in the first place! You were there with us, how bad can your memory get?!"

"Ooooh," Jingyi nodded, "Oops. I forgot."

All of a sudden, there was the loud and disrupting sound of footsteps. Jin Ling's head whirled around, "Do you hear it? It's coming from all directions!"

"There are multiple people?" Someone spoke.

Sizhui hastily covered his mouth with a sleeve, "Those are real waking corpses this time! You can even smell them!"

"Oh gosh," Jingyi covered his nose, "I think I can smell them too!"

Xue Yang raised an eyebrow, confused, but decided not to comment.

The junior disciples could only stay like sitting ducks while panicking, which incurred a sigh from Wei Wuxian.

"Um, maybe unsheathe your swords and start fighting?" Someone said.

"But to be fair, being surrounded by a bunch of corpses like that must be terrifying.."

Wei Wuxian held his fingers to his lips and began to whistle a tune. Almost immediately, the corpses went silent.

"Ahhhhhhhhh!" A girl squealed, "Wei Wuxian, ah! Marry me!"

"I wouldn't mind being the second wife! Marry me too!"

"+1!"

"+1!"

Chu Rong sent a glance to Lan Wangji. *He looks like he wants to punch someone, how scary!!*

Wei Wuxian smiled reassuringly as he said, "Just a couple of walking corpses. Don't worry, it's no big deal!"

Abruptly interjecting him, the corpses began to rampage across the streets once again.

"...."

"...."

"...."

"...wow," someone said, breaking the silence.

Lan Jingyi and Jin Ling huddled close together in an attempt to subtly recede their panic, "Is this the no big deal you were talking about?!"

"Awh! Jingyi, that little Lan, is so adorable!"

"He's like another Wei Wuxian! Except, he's our age!"

"I'm going to court him when I leave!"

"Me too!"

"Me three!"

"Me four!"

Meanwhile, a certain Lan was whistling, desperately trying to pretend that his cheeks weren't heating up.

A flash of blue light suddenly appeared, successfully annihilating each corpse at once. Lan Wangji calmly sheathed his sword, and was swarmed by multiple calls of "Thank you, Hanguang-Jun!"

Lan Wangji's gaze landed on Wei Wuxian, "Why?"

"Eh?"

"Why what, Hanguang-Jun?"

"Why am I still single? I don't know that either, haha!"

'I couldn't control these low-level corpses.' Wei Wuxian suddenly recalled such an incident happening before; when the corpses were under the control of a certain object..
'There's only one possibility...'

"Wait, so there's actually someone stronger than Wei Wuxian?!"

"Isn't he the *grandmaster* of demonic cultivation?! How is someone stronger than him?!"

'Someone had already controlled them with the Stygian Tiger Seal!'

"Oh."

"Oh."

Li Daiyu asked, "...Why do you sound so disappointed?"

"Hey, guys! Did you hear? The Jins are colluding with demonic cultivators!"

"That's so random."

"I think they're referring to how the Jin Sect was protecting Xue Yang because of the Tiger Seal."

"Nonetheless, how brazen!"

"Disgusting Jins!" the person who spoke earned themselves many glares, "I mean.. the previous generation, of course."

"Hmph! You talk as if you lowly sects never colluded with Wei Wuxian!"

"News flash! You did too!"

"....."

Lan Jingyi asked, "**Hanguang-Jun, the situation is quite dangerous, is it not? Should we leave the city as soon as possible?**"

Lan Sizhui reasoned, "But the fog is so thick. The roads are not clear, and we cannot fly out.."

"...I think I hear breathing sounds!"

A middle-aged man scoffed, "Corpses are dead, how can they breathe?"

"Cut them some slack," another spoke, "They're still a child."

One disciple informed, "It sounds like more corpses are coming!"

Jin Ling slashed Suihua into a corpse, therefore bursting it and causing it to spew a dark mist into the air.

"What's that?"

"It looks kinda dangerous..."

"Ah!" The groups coughed in unison, "Ahem- Ahem-"

"What kind of dust is this?! It's bitter and sweet, and rotten too!"

"Who calls something rotten sweet? Was it Jingyi who said that?"

"I believe so, ah."

They all covered their faces with their sleeves, but a select few had unfortunately already inhaled the gas.

"Move away from that area!" Wei Wuxian yelled, "Come over here, let me see!"

A girl cooed, "Seeing Wei Wuxian so protective over the little ducklings is so refreshing!"

"Right!"

Jingyi weakly answered, "But I cannot see you! Where are you?"

Wei Wuxian spoke, "Hanguang-Jun, unsheathe your sword so that he can come over."

Lan Wangji didn't reply, much to Wei Wuxian's confusion. Bichen's sword glare suddenly lit up from far away, capturing Wei Wuxian's attention. 'Lan Zhan is over there...?'

'Then who's the one standing beside me right now?!!'

"....." The silence continued for a few seconds before there were multiple yells of, "OH SHIT!"

"WEI WUXIAN, RUN FOR YOUR LIFE!"

"I've seen this plot so many times in novels," Li Daiyu nervously bit her fingernail, "The bad guy suddenly appears and attacks! Then the protagonist's lover will find them and worriedly ask: "...My love..?" The protagonist will heal in due time, but... the buildup is just so sad!"

Upon seeing Li Daiyu so emotional, Wen Ruohan wiped an imaginary tear from his eye. "Have you read *Blossom of Love* book four? I couldn't leave my chambers for days after reading it!"

"You're truly a fellow companion, " Li Daiyu sniffled. "Wen Ruohan, my admiration lies with you! Hold it well!"

The figure approached Wei Wuxian through the mist and reached for the qiankun pouch tied to his side.

"Don't you dare!!!"

"Not the arm!!" Someone wailed. "They're trying to steal our dear friend's arm! Someone stop them!!"

Wei Wuxian swiftly avoided their attack and released the qiankun pouch. Enraged spirits immediately sprang free, charging towards the assailant.

"Oh no! It's that bastard again!"

"Get him, Wei Wuxian!"

"Beat him till his face is unrecognizable--wait, that wouldn't be very helpful, would it..?"

"You wanna take our dear friend's Qiankun pouch, huh?" Wei Wuxian smirked, "Looks like you've got bad eyes--Why did you take my spirit trapping pouch instead?"

There was once again an eerie silence.

"....."

"Wei Wuxian disguised the spirit-trapping pouch as the Qiankun pouch beforehand?! How smart!"

"I never thought I'd admire someone as much as this! Wei Wuxian, your intellect knows no bounds!"

Lan Wangji's mouth twitched. His expression was that of immense pride .

"Hanguang-Jun!" Wei Wuxian yelled through the blustering disciples, "The gravedigger is here!"

Lan Wangji leaped into the area, immediately attacking the person clad in black mercilessly.

Wei Wuxian observed, 'The opponent's level of cultivation isn't low...'

Su She paused for a brief moment before his neutral mocking expression returned.

Jin Guangyao observed him with indifference.

Lan Wangji continued his onslaught. Wei Wuxian saw blood being spewed into the air, so he worriedly asked, "Lan Zhan, are you hurt?!"

"Awh, he's worried about his hubby's safety! Wei Wuxian, you need not worry, for Lan Wangji is a big and strong boy!"

"....I think 'man' would be more appropriate in that sentence."

"But that sounds like he's old!!! How about we just call him 'a big and strong cultivator'"

"Agreed."

"Agreed."

The mist cleared, revealing Lan Wangji as peerless as ever, with bichen at his side. "Of course not."

Li Daiyu closed her eyes and inhaled a deep breath. She then turned back to the screen before closing her eyes once again.

Lan Wangji is taken, Lan Wangji is taken, Lan Wangji is taken!!!

Wei Wuxian sighed in relief, "So it seems."

As Lan Wangji continued to fight the assailant, Wei Wuxian delved deeper into his thoughts. 'Lan Zhan probably didn't want to accidentally hurt us, so he purposely led the battle away to deal with the gravedigger on his own.'

The Lan disciples, as well as the juniors, felt a spark of affection. '*Hanguang-Jun* is so considerate!'

"Young Master Mo!" Sizhui spoke, supporting a sickly Jingyi with his shoulders. "The ones who inhaled the powder are starting to have trouble standing up!"

Wei Wuxian ordered, "Let me see. Bring him over."

"Jingyi!" a girl cried, "My baby, what happened?!!"

"Noooooooo! Don't die!!"

Several girls began to tear up, angrily cursing the stupid mysterious person to the heavens!

Su She mumbled, "What did I do..?"

Jingyi helplessly exclaimed, "I'm still alive!! Why do you all think I'm dead?!"

Xue Yang smiled, "Little Lan, don't you remember? Back then, you died." He leaned closer to whisper into Lan Jingyi's ear, "Right now, you're a ghost!"

"GHOST!!!!" Jingyi wailed, reaching out to hug a flustered Jin Ling.

"Hey! Let go of me!"

"What ghost?!!"

"Stick out your tongue, say ahhhh-" Wei Wuxian spoke as he inspected Lan Jingyi's eyes.

"Woah, Wei Wuxian is also a physician? His talents truly know no bounds!"

"Yup," With a smile, he stepped back and declared, "Congratulations! You're under corpse poisoning!"

The crowd burst into a chorus of laughter.

"Congratulations, he says! Congratulations, hahahahah!"

Wen Ruohan couldn't bite down his chuckles, "I couldn't ask for a better son!"

On the other side of the room, however, a certain purple Sect Leader facepalmed, "Wei Wuxian..."

Jin Ling looked at Wei Wuxian like he was an idiot, "What's there to congratulate about this?!"

"Well, it's another life experience." Wei Wuxian explained, "It'd be a conversation starter when you grow older."

Li Daiyu heaved a chuckle, "Only Wei Wuxian could think of something like that."

Others found themselves nodding in agreement, "Only Wei Wuxian."

"Young Master Mo, will they be alright?!" Sizhui, the angel, worriedly asked.

"Isn't our son so caring, Lan Zhan? You raised him well." Wei Wuxian fondly said, incurring a small smile from Lan Wangji.

"Mn."

Wei Wuxian beamed as if he wasn't discussing life or death, "At the moment, yes. But after it goes in the bloodstream, travels all around the body, and enters the heart, nothing will help them anymore."

Jingyi, the poor boy, looked terrified. "Wh- What will happen?!"

"So they're all gonna die?!" One girl shrieked.

"Aren't they alive right now? Surely that means Wei Wuxian found a cure!"

"You've got a point! I got scared for a second there.."

Wei Wuxian nonchalantly replied, "Whatever happens to corpses will happen to you. If you're lucky, you're just gonna rot away, but if you're not, you might become long-haired zombies that'd only be able to hop around for the rest of your lives."

"There he goes again, traumatizing the poor children." Li Daiyu sighed.

The group of disciples shivered in fear.

Wei Wuxian asked, "Wanna cure it?"

"So there *is* a cure! How is Wei Wuxian going to find it, though?"

The group of disciples obediently nodded, their faces as pale as a sheet.

"Then listen up." Wei Wuxian spoke. "From now on, you'll be obedient and listen to me, every single one of you. You'll do whatever I tell you to do. No resistance. Understood."

"Wei Wuxian is planning something evil again! He's going to do something abhorring to these innocent children, I tell you!"

"Dude, was it Sect Leader Yao who said that?"

"Yeah, I think it was."

"I forgot he was even here. My bad."

"Lans, please silence him."

"Yes, please do."

Sect Leader Yao harrumphed, "How dare you- hmmf! Hmmmmmf!"

The girls turned to the group of Lans and nodded their heads in thanks.

"Thank you."

"Thank you."

"Thanks."

"Finally."

"My sincerest thanks!"

The disciples happily nodded, "Understood!"

"...they have no sense of security whatsoever."

"Seriously, who taught these children-" The man who was speaking suddenly paused, as if remembering something.

The group began to look around the streets, inspecting houses and buildings alike.

Jin Ling harrumphed as he stood outside of a house, "How could we find anyone in such a creepy city? We have already knocked on a dozen doors...." His sentence gradually slowed down as the door of the house opened with a click .

"Gah!" Jin Ling startled. "There's really someone here!"

"....who is it?"

"Could it be the mysterious person from earlier?"

Sizhui stepped forward, completely ignorant to the shivering Jin Ling beside him, "Excuse us, but are you the manager of the shop?"

"...Yes." came an old voice from inside.

The sound gave a select few goosebumps.

"Is it a... a ghost?"

"It could just be an innocent old lady.. why you gotta do her like that, bro?"

When a hand was placed onto his shoulder, Sizhui turned around, only to come face to face with Wei Wuxian.

"Wei Wuxian is back, but I can't help but get the feeling that one of the little Lans was left behind."

"Right! They could have gone to inspect a house, only to exit and find everyone gone! Whatever would they do?"

Sizhui felt his lips growing dry. He licked them and questioned nervously, "A.. A-Niang, you double-checked that everyone was together... right?"

Wei Wuxian paused, and then gasped. "There was indeed one of you who went missing... I just assumed that they went back to Gusu!!"

"Oh no!" Sizhui gasped, "Jingyi, what are we to do?! We actually left someone behind-"

He was interjected by Wei Wuxian's laughter, "A-Yuan, my little radish. Do not worry, I made sure everyone was together.

Lan Sizhui couldn't help but heave a sigh of relief, "Thank goodness.."

Lan Wangji lightly poked Wei Wuxian on the nose, "No teasing."

Wei Ying pouted, "Okay, Lan-er-gege. I'll only stop if you give me a kiss!"

Lan Wangji, "....."

The rest of the room, "....."

Wei Wuxian heaved a chuckle, "You all are so easy to tease; it was a joke! ...but I'd still appreciate a kiss, my dear husband."

"Mn."

"Manager, it's our first time coming here. The fog was so thick that we got lost. Would it be possible for us to have some rest here? Please do us the favour. We're willing to pay."

"With what money?" Chu Rong chuckled, "Unless you're gonna leech it off of the little disciples, you won't be able to pay!"

Jin Ling spoke, clearly unimpressed. "Where would you get the money to pay? Let's make this clear--I won't be lending you any."

"Sharing is caring, little mistress!" Lan Jingyi yelled across the room.

"You-" Jin Ling huffed, "If you're so generous, why couldn't you pay? Unless you had no money too?"

"O- Of course I did!" Lan Jingyi spluttered, "But it's for emergency uses only!"

Jin Ling clicked his tongue and turned away.

Wei Wuxian shuffled through his robes for a few moments before pulling out a pink money pouch. The disciples could only stare in shock, mouths agape. "Th- Th- This!"

"Look-" Wei Wuxian grinned, "-what this is."

"....Isn't that...?"

".....Lan Wangji's money pouch?"

About the LWJ/JC fight between the girls, that was intentional.
There are some people in this fandom who hate LWJ and those who like JC. I just
wanted their opinions to be out there too lol
But like, with this chapter, we've surpassed 100k words!!! Yay!! \(^▽^)/

Next Chapter: More Yi City!! ツ(・_・)ツ

Yizhuang III - The present

Chapter Summary

ft. Wei Wuxian's special congee (◦•◦) ♡

Chapter Notes

LMAO I FORGOT ABOUT THE "EPISODES" IM SORRY AHAHAHAH _(`¶`_)_

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"You-" Jingyi yelled, "You are out of your mind! That is Hanguang-Jun's money!"

A middle-aged woman asked, "And how do you think he got it, sweetie?"

".....Hanguang-Jun gave it to him.." A Lan quietly answered.

Wei Wuxian stuck his tongue out, "Well his money is my money, right? I took it from him fair and square, blah blah blah~"

Lan Wangji nodded in agreement, "Mn."

Lan Xichen huffed in amusement.

Upon seeing the money, the old woman opened the door completely in invitation.

Jingyi couldn't help but ask, "Will she really let people inside?"

Jin Ling spoke, "Unless she's opening the door so she can let herself out, yes, Jingyi, that is what she was doing."

Lan Jingyi briefly shifted away from Jin Ling, "Sheesh.."

"Of course." Wei Wuxian said proudly, "I stuck one of my feet through the door, so she can't close it even if she wants to. If she still doesn't let me through, I'll straight-up kick the door open."

"...Wei Wuxian, that's kind of scummy of you,"

"..Right, that's kinda scummy,"

"But what other choice did he have? If he didn't, all the poor little children following him wouldn't get cured!"

"Why does he need a house to cure them anyway?"

A few Lans flinched at the mention, some clasping a hand over their mouths in instinct; others quietly shrinking into themselves.

Lan Qiren still wondered how such a man married his nephew.

The group entered the building one by one, looking around to observe the interior.

The old women shut the door with a clank, enclosing the room with darkness.

"Why isn't the lamp lit, ma'am?"

"The lamp's on the table. Light it yourselves."

"I was just trying to be polite," Jingyi murmured.

Sizhui spoke, "I will do it." He activated a talisman to use as temporary illumination. What came into view was tens, perhaps hundreds, of dolls adorned in red and green.

There was a heavy silence.

".....what are.. *those*?"

"So creepy.."

"Did you make all of these yourself, ma'am?" Sizhui politely asked, yet he couldn't conceal his astonishment.

"Such a polite boy. If I were there, I'd probably be out within the next five seconds!"

"As expected of someone raised by Hanguang-Jun!"

Wei Wuxian gave her a thumbs up, incurring various sighs from the juniors. "Good craftsmanship!"

"You know, I'm not even that surprised anymore."

"Neither am I. I'm too used to Wei Wuxian's strange shenanigans."

Jin Ling rolled his eyes, "So this is only a shop selling burial goods."

Wei Wuxian asked, "Could we borrow your kitchen, please?"

The woman began to leave the room as she said, "The kitchen is in the back. Use it as you please."

"Kitchen?" someone whispered, "Wei Wuxian, did you forget about their corpse poisoning!?"

"No, he's too much of a "mom" to abandon them... perhaps there's something in the kitchen that he needs?"

"Ah!" Yu Huizhong lit up in realization, "So this must be why they needed a house with somebody in!"

Li Daiyu muttered under her breath, "Some people are just way smarter than me.."

"I'm going to the kitchen," Wei Wuxian said, "I'll need a few of you unpoisoned ones to help me."

"I can go!" Sizhui immediately offered.

Wei Wuxian asked, "Young Mistress Jin, you coming?"

Jin Ling yelled, "Who are you calling young mistress!? Be careful what you say!"

Jin Zixuan chuckled to himself. *Such a cute son I have, ah! He's just like me in my youth!*

Reading his thoughts, Jiang Yanli couldn't retain a smile.

Jin Ling watched his parents with betrayal. They're laughing at him! They're definitely thinking that he's a peacock!!

Two hours later, Wei Wuxian came back to the group with several bowls of glutinous rice congee, which, on the surface, looked rather ominous.

"Oh dear..."

"Someone please tell me what that... *substance* is..?"

"And this," Jiang Cheng gestured to the screen, "Is why you never let Wei Wuxian two steps close to the kitchen."

Lan Xichen nodded in appreciation, "Thank you for the warning, Sect Leader Jiang.."

A few of the Lans burst into coughs at the sight of the food. Their eyes glistened with unshed tears.

Wei Wuxian helplessly spoke, "It couldn't have been that bad, could it!? You Lans are just terrible with spice!"

Lan Jingyi didn't dare touch the food he was offered, "So you three went to the kitchen to make congee? Can the congee really cure corpse poisoning?"

"Wait, so congee is the cure?"

"I've never heard of that!"

"Quickly, someone write it down! Knowing me, I'd forget such information!"

"What if it doesn't even work?"

"Yeah, they might have found a cure in the end!"

Jiang Fengmian nodded in interest, "We'll just have to see, won't we?"

Yu Ziyuan couldn't help but feel a tiny bit of sympathy for the juniors.

Wei Wuxian informed, "What cures corpse poisoning is not the congee, but rather the sticky rice."

Madam Jin couldn't help but voice her interest, "The sticky rice?"

"Jot down this folk remedy." Wei Wuxian crossed his arms, appearing proud. "When you're scratched or bitten by dark creatures in the future, just apply some sticky rice to the wound. Works like a charm."

"Interesting. I might try this one day."

"What, so you'll get poisoned on purpose!? Are you mad?"

"Well.. maybe? Maybe not."

Lan Sizhui nodded in understanding, "So that was why you insisted on entering a house with someone inside. Only a house with someone in it could have a kitchen, and only a kitchen could have sticky rice."

Lan Jingyi placed the bowl to his lips and began to drink the congee. Not a second later, however, he was spitting the contents out like it was poisonous.

Wen Ruohan shook his head, "Boy, I'd say drink it quickly while holding your nose."

"Holding my nose?" Jingyi huffed, "That's childish! A man must never show his weakness, even if it is food!"

"What kind of congee is this? I have never had such spicy congee before!"

Jiang Cheng muttered, "Now you understand why he's kept away from the kitchens."

Wei Wuxian simply shrugged, "All medicine is partly poison. The spice will make you sweat and get better sooner."

Li Daiyu couldn't help but say, "He sounds like my mom after taking me to a healer."

Yu Huizhong added, "Except he's just trying to cover up the fact that he used too much spice."

"And that."

Lan Sizhui had to cover his mouth to prevent himself from spitting it out, "Nnng... spicy indeed! The taste of it... is so scary that I almost feel some deja vu.."

Wei Wuxian watched the Sizhui on the screen intently, his emotions varied and complex.

Lan Wangji gently rubbed his husband on the back in a soothing motion, not wanting to disturb their quiet moment.

"Seriously?" Wei Wuxian spoke, "Hanguang-Jun is from Gusu as well, but he's quite good with spice. So why are you guys like this?"

"Does he seriously expect those Lans to be like those from Yunmeng? Judging by that ominous-looking congee, his preferences are even more hardcore!"

"But why is he saying that Hanguang-Jun is good with spice?"

Lan Wangji avoided all eye contact.

"Eh? This is the first I've heard of this."

"Actually, I heard that he only likes bland food! Cooking for Lans in banquets was very tough!"

"Then... maybe Wei Wuxian remembered it wrong?"

"Yeah! That's very possible!"

Lan Sizhui's eyes were bloodshot as he covered his mouth to cough, "No, senior, Hanguang-Jun likes his food mild. He never eats spice..."

The Lan disciples found themselves tilting their heads in confusion.

"Hanguang-Jun asks the kitchen for spicy food every day, though..."

"Right! One time, I saw him in the kitchens cooking spicy food! My nose was red for days because of the smell alone!"

Lan Qiren rolled his eyes. His nephew was... quite foolishly in love.

And maybe, *just maybe*, he could begin to accept that. After all, Wangji deserved at least that much.

Wei Wuxian held his chin in thought, "Really? But I do remember-"

'But I do remember that when I ate with Lan Zhan before I died, reminiscing about the old days, everything he ordered was packed with Sichuan peppers.'

'I really can't recall if he actually touched any of those dishes, though..'

Lan Xichen covered his mouth with a hand to muffle his laughter. Wangji is so adorable!!

Lan Qiren couldn't hide the fond sigh that escaped him. *Ridiculous*.

"OH!" Li Daiyu burst into laughter, slapping her knee. "Lan Wangji, you're too in love! This is actually adorable!"

"Huh, what do you mean?"

She gently wiped away a tear from within her eye and answered, "Guys, you're all too dense. He ordered the spicy food for Wei Wuxian!"

It was then that joyous laughter accompanied Wei Wuxian's shower of compliments to his husband.

'I don't know why, but all of a sudden.. I really, really want to see Lan Zhan's face.'

Lan Wangji closed his eyes, his mouth twitching into a smile. ...Wei Ying really thought of him like that back then?

Wei Wuxian found himself absentmindedly biting his nail.Now that he sees it for himself, he really was quite the idiot, wasn't he....? No wonder Zewu-Jun was so agitated.

The girls, rather unsurprisingly, began to eagerly chat amongst themselves.

"Guys, this means we have a chance, right?!"

"What chance?"

"Of finding out whether Wei Wuxian fell in love before he.. you know, died!"

"I dunno, he seems too dense."

"Yeah, he's the type to think that love is the same as friendship."

"Pshhh, he can't be that dense... can he..?"

"Anyways, the fact that he's thinking of Lan Wangji is a sign, right? Right?!"

Suddenly, loud clacks and thumps interrupted the silence, incurring a jolt from Wei Wuxian.

"Who?"

"Is it the mysterious person from before?"

"Wait, I think I hear the bamboo stick from before!"

A-Qing narrowed her eyes knowingly. She sent a brief glance to Xue Yang before her gaze turned back to the screen.

Wei Wuxian removed some of the wooden boards holding together the door and peered through a gap to see the outside.

"What are you doing?!" Jin Ling wailed, his eyes glistening with fearful tears.

"Is he scared?"

"No way, he's the mighty Young Master Jin! He's strong, brave, and fearless!"

Ouyang Zizhen nodded in awe, "Wow! I didn't know there was a young miss who appreciated the little mistress like so--Oh wait, it's just Jingyi--Why did you do that?"

Jin Ling grumbled under his breath, "Stupid. Fool. Idiot."

"Young Maiden," Wei Wuxian spoke, still looking through the gaps and crevices, "You've been following them for long. Is there anything you need?"

A-Qing crossed her arms as she mumbled, "You make it sound like *I'm* the bad guy.."

A figure on the other side jumped in surprise, something audible to all of the disciples inside the house.

"Eh? Someone's there?!"

"Is it the masked man?!"

Lan Jingyi shrank into himself a little. Oh dear, it was the ghost again... not that he was scared or anything. Definitely not.

All of the juniors huddled around the door to see, but all yelped in fright at the sight of a girl.

Her robes were sage green and were littered with various hints of sewing, coupled with splashes of bloodstains on the outer robe. Her hair was that of an inky black, silky and untamed, and her eyes were as white as snow; blood trickled freely from within their depths, streaming down her face like two scarlet rivers.

Xiao Xingchen swallowed, "A-Qing, you..."

What happened to you? Went unsaid but was heard by all who were nearby.

Xiao Xingchen obviously knew it was Xue Yang, but he hadn't known that she was beaten to such an extent...

"I can hear what they're thinking from over here," Xue Yang grumbled, and Jingyi sent him a look.

"You deserve to eat a bowl of mushrooms!" The Lan yelled, turning away with a huff. (Lan Jingyi has a strong distaste for mushrooms.)

Ignoring Xue Yang's stare, Jingyi's gaze wandered to the group sitting near the front. He'd thought of Xue Yang as quite the pleasant company, but was now being reminded of the infamous murderer he truly was.

He hopes the poor miss is all right. Her soul was shattered by *him*, after all.

"What are you scared of? In the future, you're gonna get used to seeing people bleeding from their entire face. It's only two of the seven orifices that are bleeding right now, and you can't handle it? You have to toughen up!"

"Hold on a second.." someone mumbled, their eyes widening. "Isn't the ghost we're seeing right now... the young miss over there!?"

"Eh?!" Many began to observe A-Qing curiously, only to gasp in shock.

"You're right! Who knew that such a creepy ghost could look so beautiful!"

"Why is she with Xiao Xingchen though?"

"Eh? I just assumed she was his lover. Was I wrong?"

"She's obviously his daughter!" The Nie disciple earned himself various stares.

"Hey, guys, can you like, stop talking? I'm trying to take notes here. Maybe you'll get an answer if you actually pay attention."

"...."

"...."

"Idiots," A-Qing huffed, still confused as to how they thought of her as ~~Daozhang's~~- *Shizun's* daughter. He didn't even look that old! ...maybe it's because of how young and sweet she looks!

"Don't back away anymore. Line up and look one by one. Watch for the details. In the shortest time possible, find any hidden weaknesses in those details. You must take the situation calmly and search for chances to counter-attack."

A-Qing felt that she was being a bit dramatic, but couldn't help but gasp at the accusation.
"Hey! Hidden weaknesses?! Counterattack?! It's not like I'll eat you!"

Ouyang Zizhen answered, "But one can't be too careful, right? You are, or *were* a ghost, after all!"

Wei Wuxian finished, "Most people don't have the opportunity for my guidance. Make use of it."

Yu Huizhong nodded, "He's right. It's not every day that you're taught personally by the Yiling Patriarch."

The group of Lans in the corner awkwardly coughed, communicating to one another with their eyes.

Following Wei Wuxian's advice, the disciples all but hesitantly lined up into a straight line, each taking it in turns to observe the girl outside.

A middle-aged woman spoke, "I cannot help but feel that none of them are taking anything seriously.. Aiyoh, it's like they completely forgot that they're in a coffin town!"

"But with the strong and heroic Yiling Patriarch by your side, what is there to be afraid of?!"

"Exactly!"

"He'll protect you!"

Yu Huizhong's gaze fluttered around a bit as he spoke, "I hope you guys remember how you were cursing his existence when this whole thing started.."

"But that was before we saw what he was really like!"

"Yeah, I'd only heard rumors of how he put Hanguang-Jun under his spell and forcefully married him! But now.. I think I'm under his spell as well!"

"Me too.. but I don't really mind it, though.."

Yu Huizhong took one look at their blushing faces and sighed to himself.

Lan Jingyi was obviously and clearly terrified. He fumbled over his words a bit as he asked, "I would not have to look, would I? Those under corpse poisoning cannot move. You said so yourself."

"Woah..." Li Daiyu mumbled, "Looks like our sweet Xiao Yi is scared! Would you like JieJie to read you a bedtime story?"

"You-" Lan Jingyi retorted, "Who's scared?! You're scared, your whole family's scared!"

Chu Rong muttered, "Someone's getting a bit defensive."

"Let me see your tongue," Commanded Wei Wuxian, and the other immediately complied.

"Aren't these Lans *too* obedient? Didn't they meet Wei Wuxian, like, a few hours ago?"

"This... *mirage of memories*(?) skips things a lot. From what I've noticed, many days have passed since they met at the Mo Estate.."

"Oh! I see!"

"Congratulations, you've been cured!" Wei Wuxian applauded, "Bravely take your first step forward. Come on!"

"H- HUH?!"

"First it's congratulations for being poisoned, now it's congratulations for being cured." a woman muttered. "Wei Wuxian is quite the curious spirit, isn't he?"

Wei Wuxian then turned to the others, "Finished looking? Then, everyone, tell the group what details you've picked up. Let's summarize."

A Nie disciple chuckled, "Doesn't this feel like our lectures? It's like Wei Wuxian is the teacher, and we're in his classes."

"Don't say that, bro! Or else, I'll want Wei Wuxian to come to Qinghe!!"

"Woah, great idea! Let's ask him after all of this is over!"

Jin Ling raised his hand enthusiastically, "White eyes. Female. Short and skinny. Decent looks. Holding a bamboo pole."

"That's," the girl who spoke swallowed, "Quite straightforward."

A-Qing's left brow raised. "Decent looks? Hey, but have you seen the women who walk down the streets?! They're nothing compared to me-"

"A-Qing," Xiao Xingchen scolded.

"Hmph," A-Qing crossed her arms in defeat.

Lan Sizhui offered, "The girl reaches my chest in terms of height. Her clothes are tattered and do not look clean. She is dressed almost like a beggar roaming the streets.

The bamboo pole appears to be a white cane. Maybe her white eyes were not formed after death, but instead because she had been blind before she passed away."

"Blind.." A-Qing shook her head at the thought, "Nope; I don't want to experience that again! Gosh, how blind people even survive, I do not know."

Song Lan's face was expressionless, but his eyes spoke volumes.

"Hmmm," Wei Wuxian crossed his arms with a satisfied smile, "Jin Ling had greater quantity, while sizhui had higher quality."

"Lan Sizhui focused on the small hints that gave away distinct details, whereas Jin Rulan focused on what he could see and observed her in a.. unique fashion! Truly admirable, these youngsters!"

Ouyang Zizhen stepped forward and added, "The girl is only around fifteen or sixteen. She has an oval face, with a lively air about her delicate features. She's petite and her figure is also slender. Although she's not that tidy, she's not that grimy either. It's not at all repulsive. After some grooming, she's bound to be an endearing beauty."

A-Qing humped, "At least *someone* knows how to appreciate beauty!" Her eyes wandered to a certain Jin, "*Decent looks?* I think *he's* the blind one!"

Wei Wuxian began to clap his hands and applaud, "Well done, well done. The observations are both detailed and unique. You'll definitely be the romantic type when you grow up."

At Ouyang Zizhen's red face, the disciples burst into fits of laughter.

A young female sitting in the corner beside the Juniors commented, "Definitely a romantic. He still hasn't even landed himself a wife!"

Ouyang Zizhen spluttered, "I- My standards are just high, that's all!"

The girl idly brushed a stray hair away from her face, "Anyways, if you still have no wife in the future, I'd probably be available for the picking."

"You- so shameless!"

The girl rolled her eyes, "I just said that out of the kindness in my heart! What do you mean by 'shameless'?"

"I don't even know you!" Ouyang Zizhen reasoned.

"Luo Qingqing," the girl answered, "Now you do."

"But—" Ouyang Zizhen began to fiddle with his fingers, "We haven't even k- k- kissed...."

Luo Qingqing was clearly trying not to laugh at him. "Why don't we be friends then? I wouldn't mind having another friend."

".....yeah, ok.."

Lan Jingyi shook his head disapprovingly. *Zizhen, you just missed your chance at getting a wife! You'll forever be single now!!!*

Jin Ling rolled his eyes, knowing exactly what the Lan was thinking. *Not every person is like you, and thinks that anyone they meet is a potential spouse! Get your priorities straight!*

"But how would that be possible?" Lan Jingyi asked, "Blind people move and walk slowly so that they wouldn't bump into anything, but the ghost outside had such swift movements. I have never seen a blind person so nimble before!"

"You think all people are born blind?" A-Qing retorted.

Xiao Xingchen whispered, "I think he was referring to how skillful you are at moving around, as if you could still see."

"Oh," A-Qing nodded in understanding, "I see. I'll take it as a compliment, then."

There was a silence where the disciples simply stared at one another.

**"Strange," commented Jin Ling as he watched the girl wave her arms to gesture.
"Can't she talk?"**

The girl paused for a moment, before opening her mouth and showing the emptiness inside.

The disciples recoiled back in fright, screaming over one another.

A few of the viewers, too, flinched upon seeing her empty mouth.

The calmer and more mature people, however, spoke to one another with an undertone of pity.

"So this is why she cannot speak."

"She's blind and mute."

"What a pity."

"But it seems she is no longer blind and mute! Maybe the resurrection thing has healing abilities?"

"That would explain *Xiao Xingchen-Daozhang*'s healed eyes! Wasn't he rumored to be blind?"

"Ohh, I see! I wonder how no one noticed before, though."

"They're too excited watching these memories, haha!"

Wei Wuxian asked, "Is she using sign language? Does anyone understand?"

Everyone shook their heads as 'no'.

The girl suddenly grew anxious and began to frantically knock on the floor with her bamboo stick.

"Um... is this like... a ghost attack..? You know, a panic attack.. but she's a ghost...? Haha... okay, bad joke. Sorry. Forgive me for existing."

Wei Wuxian asked, "Calm down please, miss. Would you like to write it down or draw it out?"

"Good idea there, Wei Wuxian."

"But how will she write if she's blind?"

"She could engrave it into the floor, you know, with her stick?"

"Ah, I never thought of that."

He then turned his head to the side at the sound of a noise, "Someone's here?"

"Eh? The mysterious person is back! Wasn't Lan Wangji fighting him though?"

"Maybe they managed to escape!"

"No way! Nobody escapes Hanguang-Jun!"

When he looked back, however, the girl was gone.

At the various stared she received, A-Qing was silent.

"It disappeared so quickly?"

"Could it be another walking corpse? Senior, we should shut the door first!"

Wei Wuxian quickly reattached the wooden boards to the door. He then startled at the sight of the disciples peering over his shoulder to see outside.

".....What exactly are they doing?"

"I saw a figure in black stagger outside." Jin Ling commented.

Lan Jingyi asked, "The mist-faced man?"

Sizhui explained, "Probably not. The mist-faced man had entirely different moves from this person."

"Yeah," A Lan disciple agreed. "The person from before's moves were too different. They were almost.. *similar* to our Sect's."

"Then... who is it?"

The screen gradually faded into black.

"Who do you think it is?" Wen Ruohan asked Wen Qing, who narrowed her eyes in turn.

"Hey! Don't act all buddy-buddy with me! Poor A-Ning is still traumatized, aren't you, A-Ning?"

Wen Ning shook his head innocently, "N- No! I'm just glad tha- that Sect Leader is h- ha-happy again!"

At Wen Ruohan's wide smile, Wen Qing simply rolled her eyes.

Chapter End Notes

I'm sorry for the atrocity, I wrote this while coughing my lungs out. (ノ_<。)

Next Chapter: Xiao-not-Xingchen joins us!

Yizhuang IV - The present

Chapter Summary

Is Xiao-not-Xingchen really Xiao Xingchen?!

Chapter Notes

Sorry for taking so long, everyone. I was in a forest when I got attacked by a magical beast.

I then found a house owned by an ancient cultivator and hid inside. Inside the house were many regeneration potions, which is how I recovered from my injuries.

It took a while because I had to walk all the way back home with my heavy protagonist halo weighing down on my shoulders. Sorry again! (ಠ_ಠ)

Nah, but really. My teachers do be throwing test after test in my direction _(`¶`_)_

Also, this is briefly proofread. Whenever I wrote this chapter, I was either half asleep or half awake (◐▽◐)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"*It is time.*" Announced Lan Jingyi, beginning to stand up from where he sat. "Do *not* move or I will- you know, yeah."

"No, I'm afraid I *don't* know." Xue Yang chuckled in amusement. "Whatever will you do, little brat?"

"I'll just, you know.. kill you.." Jingyi's ears were flushed red. He was trying to act cool! Why did it look so cool when Wei Wuxian said it, but not with him?!

"Oh, I'll look forward to that." Xue Yang smirked as he stared at the Lan's retreating back.

Meanwhile, much to Lan Jingyi's annoyance, a very familiar face was standing beside the platform.

"Hey," he said.

"Hey," Li Daiyu didn't even turn around as she curiously stared at the platform. "Bro, look at this. The thing has changed."

"Eh?" Lan Jingyi walked closer to see, and, yes—it had indeed changed. Instead of the [character selection] options, it now had five symbols in the center.

Although the day's events had been quite surprising so far, Lan Jingyi was still surprised to see his Clan's motif sitting in the middle.

"Eh? The four.*five* clans' motifs? Why are these here? ...there's even the Wen Sect's..."

"I dunno," Li Daiyu said. "Maybe we should get Wei Wuxian to look at it."

"Or," announced a voice from behind them. "I could look at it."

The pair swiftly whirled around, only to lock eyes with Jin Zixun.

"Why do you look surprised?" The Jin arrogantly flicked his hair to the side. "It's about time that I made my *grand* entrance."

"Yeah, no thanks." Li Daiyu turned back to the screen. "So, which one should we—"

"You insolent wench!" Jin Zixun pointed his finger at her as if it was the most powerful thing in the universe. "I *demand* an apology!"

"Well *I* demand a hot, strong boyfriend like Lan Wangji—but will that ever happen? No! We don't always get the things we want, *child*."

Jin Zixun was speechless, "...."

"Well!" He huffed, flicking his sleeves, "Arrogance leads you nowhere! Sooner or later, you'll be married off to some rich family. Learn to act like a woman."

Li Daiyu froze; her left eyebrow twitched. "What the fuck did you just say?"

"I said—"

"Hey, hey!" Lan Jingyi interjected. "Go sit down—we'll choose your Clan, of course. You're as handsome as you are smart, so please leave."

Jin Zixun's head raised a little bit higher at the praise; he obviously didn't catch onto the irony of the statement. "Very well, then. I expect the return of a *great* and *powerful* ancestor of mine!"

Li Daiyu snorted, "Bro, good one there. But how could you just promise him that? We don't even know what this thing does!"

"Exactly," Lan Jingyi reasoned. "So what does it matter? Just press it already, I wanna see what happens next!"

Li Daiyu, "...."

Nonetheless, she reached out a hand and selected the image of the Jin Motif [Sparks Amidst Snow]

What appeared next was, just like before, an optional selection.

[Character zero] [Character one]

Despite being quite confused about the "zero," she selected it.

[ACCESS DENIED. CORRUPTED SOUL. Please select another]

....

More resolutely this time, Li Daiyu selected [Character zero]

[ACCESS DENIED. CORRUPTED SOUL. Please select another]

Li Daiyu, "...."

Lan Jingyi, "...."

Li Daiyu lightly exhaled a sigh before selecting [Character one]

"Monster."

That was the first word Qin Su uttered as she opened her eyes.

The last thing she remembered was seeing Mo Xuanyu, then her husband A-Yao—no, rather —Jin Guangyao.

He was no longer the sweet husband she knew and loved. He was no longer the big brother she looked up to and respected, for he was a *monster*—a *beast* in human skin.

If she could go back in time—*oh how she wished to*—then she would tell her young and naive self what a monster that hateful man was hiding under his welcoming smile.

Ever since that moment, ever since they first locked eyes on the battlefield so long ago, her life, her devotion, her *heart* were all given to him. But unlike the *her* from before, she was no longer filled with warmth at the sight of him. He was a beast who married his sister of his own volition and even killed his(their!) son.

Qin Su mourned. She mourned for her son whom she had never gotten to watch grow up. She mourned for her baby boy, wishing to tell him once again how much she loved him, how much she *missed* him. She *mourned* for her poor, sweet A-Song—

"Mama?" A tug at her wrist and a single word uttered were enough to bring her to tears.

To say he was surprised to see his dead sister—and wife—would be an understatement.

"A-Su...."

He saw her heartbroken eyes filled with both grief and hatred. Surely, she wouldn't tell them? After all, she never did before—

Despite everything, Jin Guangyao began to anxiously stalk forward. He could take no chances.

"Sect Leader!" Su She grabbed the former by the hand, preventing his advance. "Please think clearly. There is no way that Madam Qin Su will tell them. Doing so would just bring harm to her reputation too."

"What reputation?" Jin Guangyao sneered, "Minshan, you do not know the *lengths* a grieving mother would go."

"And just what do you gain?" Su She retorted, "Sect Leader, think, everything we have done would be for naught—"

A pause.

"Young Master Rusong...?" Su She muttered.

Jin Guangyao's head spun around to face Qin Su, only to see a familiar face standing beside her.

"A-Song..?"

"Jin-Furen," Wei Wuxian politely cupped his hands in a salute.

Qin Su protectively stood in front of Jin Rusong, as if trying to hide him from prying eyes. She watched Wei Wuxian warily.

"My name is Wei Ying, courtesy Wei Wuxian. As for my appearance, Mo Xuanyu has since entrusted me with his body."

"You are..." Qin Su trailed off, "The Yiling Patriarch? Not.. Mo Xuanyu?"

She didn't sound very convinced. After all, Mo Xuanyu was a known lunatic; it was probably typical for him to say such an outrageous thing.

Lan Wangji, too, stepped forward and saluted, "It is a delight to see you again, Lady Qin. This is indeed not Mo Xuanyu; Wei Ying is my husband."

"Uh," Qin Su awkwardly averted her eyes, "I didn't really need to know that, but thank you...Second Young Master Lan.."

Lan Wangji glanced to Jin Rusong, who was clinging onto the hem of his mother's dress.
"...your son?"

Qin Su quickly pushed Jin Rusong further behind her. "What about him?"

"He is very little," Lan Wangji stated, incurring a chuckle from Wei Wuxian. *Lan-er-gege, leave the small talk to me!*

He lightly coughed into a fist, "Lady Qin, as you have probably observed, we are no longer within Koi Tower's walls. This is, most likely, the Burial Mounds."

"The *Burial Mounds*?" Qin Su repeated. Wei Wuxian nodded.

"You and... *Young Master Jin* were resurrected, as were many others. However, I cannot tell you exactly *why* or *how* we are here, but I will continue my research!"

Lan Wangji glanced to him as if saying, "What research? You've just been playing around."

"Ahahaha," Wei Wuxian laughed to fill the silence, "Why don't you go and sit beside.. uh, my Shijie! She'd love to have your company!"

"Maiden Jiang?" Jiang Yanli smiled and waved at Qin Su upon noticing her gaze.

"Mhm! My Shijie will explain everything to you! Ah, right, you don't need to worry about *Meng Yao* arriving any time soon. After all, he randomly disappeared a while ago. You and your son--did I mention how cute he is--will be safe."

"I see.. thank you for the information."

On the screen, large text appeared. [Episode Seven (第七集)]

Li Daiyu watched in satisfaction as the screen lit up.

Wei Wuxian and the juniors continue to watch the mysterious figure clad in black as he fought corpse after corpse, his sword ruthlessly slashing through them one by one.

"Good skills!" Wei Wuxian praised, clapping his hands in emphasis.

"Indeed!" Xue Yang began to applaud, "Such an amazing display of skills; I wonder which young talent this cultivator might be?"

Now returned to his seat, Lan Jingyi rolled his eyes, half-amused, but nonetheless, let himself laugh. "Your narcissism is in dire need of a cure as much as your psychotic brain!"

Wei Wuxian couldn't stop the chill that rolled up his shoulders, "Lan Zhan... was it a mistake leaving Xue Yang to our poor Xiao Yi?"

Lan Wangji helplessly blinked and replied in a slow, monotone voice, "No... I trust him."

"Aiya, Lan Zhan, you're so silly." Wei Wuxian fondly chuckled. His husband was so cute! Even though Lan Zhan completely misunderstood his question, hearing him say such words made a warm pool of affection form within his stomach.

"Xiao Yi loves you too~" Wei Wuxian returned to clinging onto his husband's arm, smiling at the familiar scent of sandalwood.

Suddenly, mist erupted around the man. Lan Jingyi cried, "Oh! Is it the corpse-poisoning again?!"

Upon realizing that the powder was being released, the man hastily raised an arm to protect his face, careful not to inhale anything.

"Poor man," a middle-aged man muttered. "It looks like he was too late."

"Can't Wei Wuxian just cure him with the spicy congee?" Another inquired.

"Peh!" Luo Qingqing muttered. "Who would eat that? I'd rather waste away finding another cure!"

"But like..." Yu Huizhong fumbled over his words, "The congee doesn't necessarily have to be spicy. Wasn't that just Wei Wuxian's preferences?"

"Oh, you're right!"

"So smart!"

Lan Sizhui said, "Senior Mo, this man, we..."

"The corpses are gathering around again!" The group of disciples who were watching the scene narrated.

"Thank you for that," someone muttered, a mix between adoration and amusement layered over their tone.

"Oh no! He inhaled so much of the powder!"

"He's starting to wobble!"

Wei Wuxian narrowed his eyes before nodding, "We have to save him."

"You know, I've been wondering.." a young female cultivator muttered, "Sure, it's only been a couple shichen or so.. but doesn't Wei Wuxian have some fixation on saving people?"

"Come to think of it, he does! Wouldn't saving this stranger put both him and the juniors in danger? So selfless!"

Jiang Wanyin muttered from beside Lan Xichen, "I'm surprised these knuckleheads even noticed, with how fixated they are on Wei Wuxian and Lan fucking Wangji's painfully annoying love story."

"Now, now, Sect Leader Jiang. Their comments are quite amusing though, wouldn't you agree?"

Lan Qiren exhaled a wheeze that sounded like a fish drowning.

An unknown person added, "Do you remember? Back at the Mo Manor, he was about to reveal his identity just to protect some snot-nose kids that he just met!"

"How do you even remember that...?" Li Daiyu muttered.

The juniors lit up at the mention, though quickly deflated after a few seconds. Senior Wei had done so much for them, yet they just repaid him by being hindrances. He could have so easily left them behind and continued on with his second life, but he continued to stay and protect them...

"Senior Wei!!!" They immediately rushed to his side, flocking around him like persistent bees to honey. As the only one wearing black amidst the Lans' mourning robes, Wei Wuxian stood out like a sore thumb. Though that quickly changed when Jin Ling and Ouyang Zizhen followed suit.

"Senior Wei, you've done so much for us!"

"Senior Wei, do you want me to cook for you? I learned from my mom; I promise it won't taste bad!"

"Senior Wei!"

"Senior Wei!"

"Senior Wei, I want to repay you somehow! How about I sneak you in some Emperor's Smile?"

Somewhere far, far away, a certain old Lan deeply inhaled a breath.

"Senior Wei, I really admire you! Though I won't turn to demonic cultivation, I'd be honored to learn some cultivation techniques from you!"

"Me too! Senior Wei, you're like the mother I never had!"

"And Hanguang-Jun's the father!" Li Daiyu yelled over the loud ruckus.

"Now now, everyone. Settle down," Wei Wuxian couldn't contain his smile, happily indulging each one of them with his hugs. (Not excluding Lan Wangji, of course.)

From the corner, Lan Jingyi's eyes were *not* watering, he was *not* sulking, and he was *not* jealous!

"Don't worry, little brat." Xue Yang itched to release his binds so he could ruffle the poor kid's head. "In my heart, out of all the Lans, you're *definitely* my favorite."

Lan Jingyi stared at him with a mixture of disgust and contempt before turning away with a huff, "Who's worrying? I dare you to say that again!"

"Which part? Oh, you mean when I said that--out of all the Lans--" Xue Yang swallowed down the rest of his sentence when a rock was thrown at his head. Abuse. *This was adult abuse!*

At Wei Wuxian's bold declaration, Jin Ling exclaimed, "And how do you intend on doing that? We can't go over there now. The corpse-poisoning powder is everywhere. You're gonna get poisoned if you go near!"

Wei Wuxian stood before two of the mannequins, his gaze locked onto them. "How about these two?"

The juniors tilted their heads in confusion.

"....I forgot those were there.."

"Me too.. I think I'm gonna throw up.."

"They don't look too bad!" Chu Rong nodded at her own words, "Though the makeup could do with a few touch-ups here and there, it looks alright! What else would you expect from a poor city with no inhabitants?"

"Eyes behind thy long lashes, lips parted and smiling in tease."* Wei Wuxian chanted. He slit his finger on a blade; just enough to draw blood. He then placed the same finger onto the mannequins' eyes. *"Mind not the good or the evil, with smeared eyes I summon thee."

Jin Zixun coughed into a fist, glanced around him, then inched closer. Just out of interest. After all, demonic cultivators should just die. Yes. It was just out of interest...

"What's he doing?" Someone asked.

"Demonic cultivation." Another answered.

"No shit," the first person clicked their tongue, "A-Tang, you think I'm a fool? That's not what I asked."

"Then what *did* you ask?" A-Tang scoffed. "*What spell is he doing?* How are any of us cultivators supposed to know that?"

"Shut up, you accurate substitute for my dog's shit! Even my shoe would be offended if I stepped on you!"

"One, what the fuck did you just say?" A-Tang clicked her knuckles, "Two, if a fight is what you're looking for, then you've got one!"

"Come at me, bitch!"

"Gladly!"

"Stop, stop!!!" A third party interjected, "This is why I tell your brother not to let you two stay together for too long. Two seconds ago, you were literally best friends! What happened?!"

"It's her! She started it!"

A-Tang scoffed, "Hey! A-Dong, you liar! Don't believe her! Ning-ge, she called me dog shit!"

"Language," the elder chided before swiftly turning to the other, "A-Dong, A-Tang, is this any way to behave in front of the other sects? You'll bring disgrace to the Qinghe Nie sect!"

A-Dong simply crossed her arms, turning away with a 'humph,' whereas A-Tang sent her a disdainful glance before following suit.

"Hey, how can people get too tired of staying together for too long?" Jingyi asked as he tried to balance a rock on his nose.

"It's because there's nothing else to talk about." Xue Yang fiddled with his now-free wrists, amused at the fact that the Lan hadn't noticed his escape. "Though, I doubt you'd ever need to worry about that. After all, once your mouth opens, it never shuts. Quite impressive, if I do say so myself."

"Thank you," Jingyi huffed a proud smile, "One time I even talked longer than my baba. And he's known to be very talkative."

"Baba? Wei Wuxian?" Xue Yang inquired. "Why do you call him baba? Isn't he your senior?"

"Just because.." Jingyi grumbled. "He's my baba, what more is there to it?"

As a large current of wind sped through the building, the disciples panicked, "What is happening?"

"Hehehe.." The mannequins raised their heads and their eyes shone a menacing shade of red. "Hehehehehehe!"

Lan Jingyi felt a wave of goosebumps creep up his skin. He wasn't good with supernatural things (specifically ghosts), even though he himself was a cultivator!

"This is—" Lan Sizhui exclaimed as the mannequins continued to giggle, "Summoning of painted eyes!"

"Huh?!"

"Summoning of painted eyes? What's that?"

Wei Wuxian sent the mannequins a small nod, in which they sent one another side glances at.

"Bring the living person inside." Wei Wuxian seemed to emit a menacing aura as he spoke, "As for the rest, *eliminate them all .*"

"Wow." Li Daiyu said. "Guys, I think I had a heart attack just now.. Qi deviation..? I don't know; whatever it is. But anyway; my point being that Wei Wuxian looks so hot and I—"

"Calm down, Li-Guniang." Nie Huaisang itched for a fan. He was also *slightly* offended that nobody ever simped like that over him, but life is life..

The mannequins rushed out, slaughtering corpse after corpse; their laughter and giggles echoing throughout the room. A few minutes later, they'd successfully destroyed the large swarm and rescued the man, dragging him along by the arms.

"Bro, what's up with Xue Yang's face?" Li Daiyu whispered, glancing across the room. "He looks.. constipated."

"I don't know. I think he's cringing for some reason." Yu Huizhong whispered back. "Why are we whispering?"

Wen Ruohan spoke, "I don't know. Guys, isn't Ying-er so cool? If you'd like to purchase his portrait, that would be five silvers—oh my, thank you, kind one! Oh—you're too generous! I wonder which poor painter will have to paint all these, haha! Ah, I'm afraid that isn't enough; go ask your mother for money. Thank you for your purchase! Thank you, thank you!"

At the sight of their faces once again, a few disciples couldn't help but recoil back in fright.

Lan Jingyi murmured, "Does it feel like your three views are on the verge of collapse? A little excitement welling up, too? It was the same for us when we first saw it.."

"Is this child okay?" A woman whispered.

"Isn't he the one terrified of ghosts? Poor kid, it must be hard being a cultivator with such a fear."

"Why is he even a cultivator in the first place?"

"Dude, what the fuck? Why are you insulting my baby Jingyi like that?"

"Yeah, dude. That's so not cool."

The mannequins gently set down the man onto the hard floor. From afar, it was hard to see his face. But now that he was right before them, the juniors got a good look at it.

"Not bad." Someone whispered.

"Although he's blind—why do I feel a sense of familiarity?—his sharp jawline makes up for it! Oh, and those sword skills. Imaging sparring with him!"

"Right!" Yu Huizhong praised, "I'm surprised he even managed to fight so flawlessly without his sight—wait, why does this sound familiar to me too?"

"Maybe he's a famous person that we've forgotten?"

"No... the words 'famous' and 'forgotten' shouldn't be put into the same sentence. After all, such a prominent cultivator wouldn't be forgotten so easily—"

"Holy shit, is that Xiao Xingchen?!" Li Daiyu exclaimed.

The group of disciples who had been speculating each cleared their throats. Resonating throughout the room was the sound of wheezing, dry coughs, and mucus being coughed up—oh, Wen Qing was already to the rescue, good.

"Xiao Xingchen! I knew it was him!"

"But Da-Shixiong, didn't you say—"

"Ahahahaha, shidi, whatever are you talking about? Of course we knew it was Xiao Xingchen, right boys?"

"Yes!"

"Definitely!"

The disciple then turned around to whisper, "...who is Xiao Xingchen again?"

"Da-shixiong, you're so silly! He was just mentioned as missing after pursuing the delinquent Xue Yang. Speaking of, he's sitting right there."

"Where?"

"*Da-Shixiong!*" The elder was lightly slapped on the arm, "Are you so blind that you cannot see him?!no pun intended."

"...." Xiao Xingchen suddenly got the feeling of many eyes poking through his back. He sent Song Lan a sideways glance, only to see that the latter was equally uncomfortable. Just what had those youths been discussing?

The doors closed with a small *click* and was soon followed by silence.

Though the silence was soon enough broken when the man burst into hacking coughs, his hand weakly covering his mouth. "Who are you?"

Unbeknownst to him, the black cloth that covered his sword slowly slipped off, revealing a luxurious sheath of silver.

Xiao Xingchen froze--he'd recognize that sword anywhere.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter was originally over 6,000 words but I decided to cut it into two.

The next update is confirmed for Sunday/Monday! Also, happy birthday to my older brother (,• - •,,)

Also, can you guess who the corrupted soul is? Haha, sorry to say, but they're staying dead <3

Next Chapter: BREAKING NEWS: big baddie fierce corpse destroys ceiling and tries to kill young mistress Jin Σ(°□°)

Yizhuang V - The present

Chapter Summary

Song Lan arrives, though very much dead...

Chapter Notes

Hey people! I've never updated so quickly... this is celebration-worthy! (＼・υ・＼)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Xiao Xingchen froze--he'd recognize that sword anywhere.

Beside him, Song Lan looked equally surprised, though his expression appeared as if everything was slotting together like a puzzle. It didn't take long for his shock to be replaced with anger.

Xiao Xingchen held his hand over Song Lan's—the one which was about to unsheathe Fuxue.

"Not now." He whispered, "But if what I think is happening is in fact happening...."

Lan Jingyi startled, "That's-!"

Wei Wuxian clamped a hand over his mouth and pulled him back. 'This guy had his sword covered with a black cloth. It's clear he doesn't want others seeing it.'

He slowly glanced to the disciples and held a finger to his lips, "Shh."

The girls nodded in a trance, infatuated by the on-screen Wei Wuxian's serious expression.

"Woah..." one whispered.

"Shh..." another added thinly, "Wei Wuxian said don't talk."

"Right..." The girl slowly nodded in submission. "Shh! Everyone, shhh!"

"You're making more noise by saying that!"

"Shhhh!!"

"You 'shhh'! You're being so loud!"

"Why are we all whispering?"

Wen Ruohan replied, "Because Ying-er said 'shhh.'"

"And why are we following his orders?"

The girls immediately answered, "Because he's strong." "Because he's cool." "Because he's hot."

"...."

Jin Ling continued to stare at Wei Wuxian, trying to get his attention. Once the latter finally noticed, he mouthed the word: "Shuang. Hua."

Xiao Xingchen gripped his sword tighter. If Xue Yang actually managed to—no—*somehow* Xue Yang had managed to unsheathe it.

Shuanghua was once sealed, sealed so that only *he*—the owner—could wield it. But now it wasn't. (Maybe it was because he wasn't strong enough. After all, he failed to save everyone.)

Wei Wuxian tilted his head in confusion, 'Shuang...Hua?'

**Jin Ling fumbled for a few moments before going to the table and writing onto the dust:
Shuang Hua**

A-Qing, who had been silent for a while, seethed at the memory. Stupid Xue Yang and his stupid evil tricks!

"Go trip in a ditch and fall to your death, you shit-brained asshole!" She yelled to (what appeared to be) no one specifically.

Many were aghast. What language, coming from a young woman, no less! How shameless!

In the corner, Xue Yang lightly chuckled to himself. "Aiya, so it seems Little Blind Qing still uses such colorful language. She's so amusing, isn't she?"

Lan Jingyi raised his eyebrows, then furrowed them in confusion, before raising them once again in request of an explanation.

Wei Wuxian glanced to the juniors and mouthed, "The sword of Xiao Xingchen--Shuanghua? " Jin Ling, Lan Jingyi, and Lan Sizhui nodded in unison.

Wei Wuxian then glanced to the man sitting behind him, 'So this is the legendary Xiao Xingchen?'

"No, it's not." Xiao Xingchen wanted to say. "It isn't me. Don't trust him."

Because despite everything, deep down, though he hated Xue Yang for his misdeeds, he didn't wish him dead, really. (He hated *Xue Yang*. But he *didn't* hate the boy who had landed on his doorstep one evening.)

And despite everything, his morals remained the same. (But did they really?) He still strongly believed that evil should be punished. Though, those with a good heart, such as his shizhi, were another case entirely. ("How utterly biased of you, Daozhang." He could hear Xue Yang taunt within his mind.)

Despite everything, he still thought of the little delinquent as the stranger he once saved, the stranger who bought vegetables with him at the market, the stranger who he'd grown to feel fond of, the stranger who he'd thought of as an ally—

Xiao Xingchen wanted to be sick. (Perhaps he was the evil one.)

"Thank you for the help," 'Xiao Xingchen' slowly stood himself up, reaching out for his sword. Before he could touch it, however, Wei Wuxian quickly pulled up the black cloth. "I'll take my leave."

"He seems awfully eager, doesn't he?" Luo Qingqing commented from the sidelines.

"He might just be cautious. After all, he's a blind man. Who's to say that they weren't a group of bandits or demonic cultivators?"

"Especially since Senior Wei used demonic cultivation just then... Xiao Daozhang probably sensed it."

There was the sound of a smack, which was soon followed by: "You brat! What are you calling him Senior for?!"

Wei Wuxian crossed his arms, "Don't go just yet, You're under corpse poisoning."

"Is it severe?"

"Quite so."

"If it's severe, what would be the point of staying?" 'Xiao Xingchen' lowered his head. "It's long past hope, anyways. Why not kill a few more corpses before I become one as well?"

"....."

Xiao Xingchen had eyes now. So not only could he *sense* their gazes, but he could practically *see* them now.

The silence was so quiet that you could hear someone quietly cracking their stiff bones before lightly exhaling in satisfaction. Though, what accompanied this was yet another yell, "You—when did you break out of the ropes?!"

Lan Jingyi gasped, "Who said that you are long past hope? Stay here!" He pointed to the befuddled Wei Wuxian. "He will cure you!"

Xue Yang smiled, even as he was being tied up for what felt like the fiftieth time. "Little Lan, I never knew it was you who said that. You're so funny."

"Me?" Wei Wuxian helplessly pointed to himself. "Sorry, but were you talking about me?"

Lan Jingyi said, "Did you not cure us just now?"

"But he's already breathed in too much of the corpse-poisoning powder..." Wei Wuxian trailed off.

"I've already killed a number of corpses in this city." 'Xiao Xingchen's expression was unreadable as he spoke, "They kept on following me, and new ones joined in ceaselessly. If I stay, it's only a matter of time before you're drowned in a crowd of corpses."

"Was that a threat..?" Wei Wuxian paused before resting a hand on his chin. "Woah, that actually was a threat. I never noticed."

Lan Wangji decided not to comment on how nonchalant his husband was about the matter. They were safe now; that's all that matters.

Lan Jingyi stared at the scene in horror, "There.. are so many! They filled the entire street! And more are coming! The mannequins will not be able to hold them off any longer!"

"Wait, the mannequins are still fighting?"

"Yeah, I was under the impression that the fight was over."

"Let's just ignore the fact that we could hear the sound of fighting this whole time, yes?"

Wei Wuxian turned to Lan Sizhui, "Are there any blank talismans? Already-written ones are fine as well."

Lan Sizhui nodded, "I do have some."

He passed Wei Wuxian a handful of talismans, and the latter drew blood from a finger and scribbled over the joss paper. The talisman burst into flames and crumbled until only dust was remaining. "With prairie fires, it fails to die,"

"Oh? A new demonic technique?"

"What do you think he'll do this time?"

"Hm... I bet on him summoning Wen Ning, haha!"

"With Xiao Xingchen sitting right there? No way that's gonna happen, brother."

Wei Wuxian lightly blew onto the powder and observed as it flowed to the group of mannequins standing at the back, "When spring winds blow it regains life."

"Xiao Xingchen" simply watched(listened?) in contemplation.

"He's definitely suspicious." Luo Qingqing crossed her arms, "He's either planning something bad, or he's after Wei Wuxian..."

At the implication, Lan Wangji's eyes went an entirely other shade of gold.

"What do you mean by 'after' Wei Wuxian?" a disciple asked.

"You know," Luo Qingqing lightly waved her hand, "Like trying to *steal* him from Lan Wangji or something."

"No, we really don't know!" The group of disciples desperately wanted to answer. They were being frozen to death by Lan Wangji's cold demeanor! Someone, please rescue them, ah!!

Mannequins of different appearance, stature, and size jolted to life as if a switch had been flipped. Some were modeled as beautiful women, some as strong, muscular men, and others as small children.

At the side, one of the young male mannequins lightly tugged onto a girl's braids. Once he got her attention, he gave a friendly wave accompanied by cheeky giggles.

"You know... this reminds me of something.." Luo Qingyang muttered under her breath, sending a sideways glance to Jin Zixuan.

The peacock sputtered, "W-What?! What are you looking at me like that for?"

Luo Qingyang simply raised an eyebrow.

Jin Zixuan began to draw circles on the ground, "I didn't... I wasn't rude to her to get her attention or anything... I just—"

Jiang Yanli giggled, "A-Xuan just wasn't used to showing his feelings. A-Ling is just like him in that sense."

Wei Wuxian huffed, "But he publicly humiliated you! You may forgive him now, but I will never forget the tears he made you shed!! Shijie, if he dares to bully or cheat you, I'll make sure his title of 'peacock' no longer stands!"

Jin Zixuan pursed his lips. Wei Wuxian would forever be the same, for sure.

"Even after the lengths I went through to defend you from these hypocritical bastards.. I even called you my didi! How could you say that to me?"

"What was that?"

Jin Zixuan swallowed, "...I defended you from—"

"No, no, not that part."

"....I even called you my didi..?"

"Yes! That!" Wei Wuxian crossed his arms, "Gege."

"....."

"You must call me gege. Only then will I acknowledge you as my brother."

"....." Jin Zixuan was speechless. He sent a glance to Lan Wangji, as if asking "*What happened to Wei Wuxian after all this time?*"

Realizing that the Jin wasn't going to respond, Wei Wuxian lingered for a few moments before turning away. *Stupid peacock.*

After Wei Wuxian finished reciting the incantation, the juniors exclaimed in unison, "All the paper mannequins started moving!"

"Hold your breath." At Wei Wuxian's order, they all immediately covered their mouths.

"He's not planning what I think he's planning....*right?*"

"....I think he's planning what you think he's planning.."

"Well," Jingyi added with a proud smile, "I think that although you think that you know what he's thinking, I think I *actually* know what he's thinking of doing."

"....."

Wei Wuxian opened the doors widely, consequently allowing the corpse-poisoning powder to drift in. The mannequins all immediately rushed out, one after another, before they'd all eventually left; Wei Wuxian soon closed the doors.

"No one breathed it in, right?" At his question, he received multiple head shakes.

Wen Ruohan brushed his hands together as if *he'd* just done all of the hard work, "Now, what's next? Ah, right, we need to cure this *suspicious stranger*—stranger danger, Ying-er, remember that—and hope that he recovers swiftly. Good luck to all the little ducklings!!"

Wei Wuxian graciously offered a bowl of congee to 'Xiao Xingchen,' "The poison has already worked its way into your body. I have a bowl here with something that might help you, but it might not do anything at all."

Meanwhile, the disciples were busy watching the exciting display outside.

Due to the view and angle, everyone in the room could see the fight as well.

"Help... That mannequin lady's nails are terrifying. One swipe and five deep gouges."

"He slammed it into the ground! Look look look! It broke!"

"That male mannequin is so strong! it can lift so many walking corpses at once!"

"Why is that little girl's tongue so long and tough? Is she a hanged ghost?"

Wei Wuxian said, "It doesn't have the best taste though. Do you want to try it? If you don't want to live anymore though, then never mind."

"I was under the impression that Wei Wuxian would try to save anyone who was dying... but if the dying man didn't wish to continue living, he would let them pass peacefully instead of forcing his righteousness onto them..."

"That's surprisingly... respectful of him."

"I'm beginning to wonder who the true righteous cultivators are."

"Wei Wuxian has such a noble character that it makes me almost envious. If only my thoughts were as selfless and kind as his.."

"....Of course I want to live. If I can live, then I will do my best to keep myself alive."
'Xiao Xingchen' replied as he took a sip.

After a moment's pause, he said in a strained voice, "Thank you."

"See that? See that?!" Wei Wuxian rejoiced, "You brats are so spoiled! You ate my congee and kept complaining after!"

"....."

"....."

Luo Qingqing lightly rolled her eyes, "He was clearly about to die after eating that congee. Wei Wuxian, you silly, silly child."

Though "Xiao Xingchen" completely crushed Wei Wuxian's delight when he added, "But I just considered it. If I had to eat this every day, I choose death." His pale complexion made him look very pitiful.

Luo Qingqing added, "No, rather—instead of dying straight after consumption, he thinks it's so bad that death is more merciful. Right. Noted."

Jin Ling pointed a finger at Wei Wuxian and clutched his stomach as he laughed in a hysterical manner, "Hahahahahahaha!"

Jiang Cheng had a double-take. He couldn't even replace his shock with anger, which was rather unusual for him.

He had *never*—not since the boy was a mere child, at least—seen Jin Ling laugh like that. Even after raising him for who knows how many years, it was a rare occurrence for his nephew to smile and *let* others see it. (Of course, even his *own nephew* preferred Wei Wuxian over him.)

Jiang Cheng weakly chuckled into a hand. Yet again, the dark, inferior part of him was overthrowing his emotions.

Lan Jingyi, who had still been watching the fight outside, exclaimed, "Alright! They're dead, we won- Why are you guys laughing?"

Suddenly, there was a loud creak coming from the ceiling above. Wei Wuxian immediately glanced up before yelling, "Scatter! Above you!!"

As they'd separated, however, a man broke through the ceiling and landed successfully on two feet in the center of the room, with bits of debris falling down alongside him.

Xiao Xingchen's blood ran cold.

'A fierce corpse!!'

"Zichen..." his eyes were trained onto the screen, though widened in horror. "Just what..."

"Just what did he do to you...?"

The fierce corpse released an intimidating aura, which was accompanied by a cold expression. It slowly stepped forwards before unexpectedly breaking into a sprint, startling the life out of Jin Ling, who could barely block the attack with Suihua.

"Jin Ling!" Lan Sizhui exclaimed.

"Isn't that.." the Lan disciple glanced to Song Lan, "*Ahem* the guy beside Xiao Xingchen?"

"I kinda forgot his name... Is that disrespectful? Am I breaking a rule by not knowing his name?"

"But you can't help having a bad memory.."

"But he looks human now.. did he somehow switch back?"

"Right!" Another exclaimed, "Look! Xiao Xichen's eyes have been healed! He isn't wearing that silly blindfold!"

"I never noticed!"

"Me neither!"

"The resurrection thing must have healed them!"

"Woah, to think it has such amazing properties!"

"This must be the immortals at play! They probably pity us cultivators and decided to gift us with this blessed second chance!"

Wei Wuxian watched the fight with narrowed eyes. *What vicious swordsmanship. If it wasn't for the fact that Jin Ling's Suihua sword was so spiritually powerful, then neither sword nor man would be alive now.*

"Thank the gods that the Jin sect is rich! Thanks to their wealth, the poor boy was able to stand a chance against this fierce corpse!"

"Thank the gods, indeed."

"Yes, yes."

"A good cultivator requires both skill and a good blade. Consider this child lucky."

The corpse leaped forwards to attack once again, but was stopped by "Xiao Xingchen"'s interference. However, he'd just barely recovered from the recent corpse poisoning, so his body collapsed onto itself!

Wei Wuxian realized that the situation was getting out of hand, so he pulled out the flute from within his sash, and began to play. *I command you to stop right now!*

The fierce corpse slightly wavered under his display of power, though merely turned its head with no intention of stopping.

"Senior, look out!"

I can't control him!* Wei Wuxian thought over the ruckus, *This fierce corpse already has a master!

"....."

"So.... Who do you wanna bet it is this time?"

"Su She?"

"Out of the question. He's too weak."

"You-what did you say?!"

"The truth."

"You-"

As he continued to dodge the corpse's strikes, Wei Wuxian gripped his flute tighter. *If I can't control him, then I have no other choice!*

He once again began to play and summoned two of the stronger male mannequins from before, watching as they erupted from within the ground. The fierce corpse attempted to fight back but was swiftly apprehended by them both and held down onto the floor.

"Flip him over." Wei Wuxian commanded.

Xue Yang whispered, "What's with Wei Wuxian and personally searching people...?"

Wei Wuxian eyes surveyed the body, *His tongue is cut. Why are there so many of them like this here?*

"It's just really unfortunate that you're blind. Some even kneeled down, cried, and kowtowed for you to spare the young and elderly of their families If I hadn't cut off all of their tongues, I bet they would have been wailing and shouting 'Spare us!' Ahahahahahah!"

Xiao Xingchen clenched his fists so tightly that it almost drew blood.

Instead, he asked the Lan disciples, "Have any of you studied 'Inquiry'?"

"Oh? What's this? Inquiry can be used on fierce corpses?"

"Since when?!"

"I didn't know that!"

"I thought it could only communicate with the dead—never mind. Forget I said anything."

Lan Sizhui raised his hand."I- I have!"

"How good is your qin language? Have you had any practical experience? Are the spirits you summon able to lie?"

"I think Wei Wuxian has forgotten that Lan Sizhui, our sweet baby, is still a child. Expectations, expectations, tut tut."

Luo Qingqing couldn't help but sigh, "But our sweet baby Sizhui is very mature and well-mannered. It's only natural that we expect more from him."

Wei Wuxian had no words, even when they called his(his!!) son "our baby." After all, his little A-Yuan is *his* baby officially, *not* theirs.

And he definitely wasn't pouting. Definitely.

Lan Jingyi added, "Hanguang-Jun said that Sizhui's qin language is pretty good."

If Lan Zhan said so, then that means he's definitely good enough.

Wen Ruohan wiped an imaginary tear from his eye. "Wangji, as my new son-in-law, please treat Ying-er well."

Li Daiyu sniffled, but nonetheless nodded in agreement.

"The spirits I summon can choose not to answer, but they can't lie." Lan Sizhui seated himself and let the guqin rest on his lap. "So as long as they're willing to answer, they'll tell the truth."

Lan Wangji couldn't contain his proud smile. Lan Sizhui, who had been nervously glancing to his father, felt his ears heat up in embarrassment.

So it seems he got the theory of inquiry correct...

"Then let's begin." Wei Wuxian said. "First question, ask him who he is."

After Lan Sizhui finished asking the question on the guqin, Lan Jingyi said, "What did he say?"

After a moment, Lan Sizhui's eyes widened. "Song Lan!"

There was a pause, and then—

"Oh. So that was his name."

Chapter End Notes

Lmao so one day I was rewatching CQL and my mom pointed at the juniors and said "Aren't they the little ducklings?" I love her so much (¬▽¬)

Next Chapter: big baddie delinquent Xue Yang reveals his evil scheme ψ('∇')ψ

Yizhuang VI - The present

Chapter Summary

The results of inquiry, and a serious talk between Wei Wuxian and the mysterious stranger.

Chapter Notes

Ayo guys I'm not gonna make any excuses this time... Okay, I am, but still—I got caught up in writing my other SV book, which (sadly) only has a few pre-written chapters so far. I'll post it in a little while when I have the plot more on track.

Aight if I've missed something or messed anything up, please do tell me because I have no idea what's happening either since it's been so long :)

Shortest update I've ever made, but I mean at least it's something lmao-

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Throughout the silence, Wei Wuxian's multitude of hectic thoughts broke down into one. 'Xiao Xingchen's best friend, Song Lan?!"

Xiao Xingchen couldn't restrain his instinctive flinch at the term, self-deprecating thoughts quickly overtaking his former feelings of guilt. He covered up his arms, hands sinking into the white fabric, as if it would protect him from the emotions he so desperately tried to swallow down.

"The second question, who killed him?"

The spirit refused to reply, instead deciding to draw out the silence again. In the end, Wei Wuxian decided to try once more: "If, he doesn't want to answer it, then-"

Before he could continue, Lan Sizhui said, "Oh, it is here."

Many unconsciously inched closer in interest. There were some within the room who were painstakingly aware of the name about to be spoken aloud, whereas others were oblivious,

and such, were undeniably both curious and anticipating what was to come as the scene rolled along, like scenes of a picture film within a camera.

However, one question had been crossing each individual's mind.

Just who had killed the famed Song Lan?

The notes were strummed, and all of a sudden, Lan Sizhui was recoiling back in horror, his face an ashen grey. "Impossible!"

"What did he say?"

"He said..." Lan Sizhui visibly gulped. "Xiao Xingchen."

Song Lan's head quickly snapped to the cultivator robed in white, precedently aware of his best friend's guilty thoughts. His demeanour faltered at the sight of Xiao Xingchen's head lowered in shame, hands attempting to scratch through his pale garment, as if it were an anchor chaining him in place to the ground beneath his feet.

He quickly brought the other into a tight embrace, hands gently running through soft hair as he whispered quiet promises. "It wasn't you, it wasn't your fault."

Xiao Xingchen allowed himself to fall further into his friend's arms, hiding his shamefully crying face from the prying eyes that bore holes through his chest.

Jin Ling crossed his arms with a scoff, eyebrows furrowing in confusion. "You definitely played it wrong!"

Many within the crowd nodded in agreement, their gazes switching to and fro between the cuddling friends and horrific reveal on the screen.

"There's no way that Xiao Xingchen would do such a thing!"

"Of course. This is a young junior, of course. They could have interpreted it wrong."

"Yes, yes, that is very correct. See, even the Lans understand that it was incorrect."

In truth, a select few of the Lan disciples were pale from head to neck, for they had understood the spirit's reply loud and clear.

Lan Sizhui shook his head solemnly. "But 'who are you' and 'who killed you' are the two most easiest and common questions of inquiry. Just now I even checked them before I played. I definitely did not play them wrong!"

Sweat could be seen dripping from Jin Ling's cheek. "Then you must've interpreted it wrong."

"The three characters of 'Xiao Xingchen' do not often appear even in inquiry. Even if he answered with a different name and I interpreted it wrong, it would not just so happen to be this name."

"...Song Lan went to find the missing Xiao Xingchen, yet Xiao Xingchen killed him..." Lan Sizhui remarked, his eyes blinking slowly in deep thought. "Why would he kill his friend?"

"Indeed," Xue Yang chuckled, his grin as wide as ever. "Why would Xiao Xingchen kill his beloved friend? Such horrific behaviour is beyond me!"

"*Beyond you?*" Wei Wuxian's gaze hardened, eyes haphazardly morphing into an icy frost. "Such deplorable behaviour is *beyond* you? Xue Yang, you are really-"

"Wei Ying, don't hit."

"...." With a click of his tongue, Wei Wuxian slumped back in his seat, his spouse's arms wrapped protectively around him as he fumed.

There was no guarantee that Xue Yang would leave this room with his remaining pinkie finger intact.

Wei Wuxian crossed his arms and spoke, "Let's put this aside for now."

"Sizhui, the third question: Who is controlling him?"

Lan Sizhui spoke slowly and articulately, interpreting each word individually. "The. Per. Son. Be. Hind. You."

All was silent.

All eyes immediately snapped over to the man dressed in black, leaning against the wall behind their persons. The man clicked his fingers, then cockily leaned his head on a hand with a smirk.

With a snap of his fingers, Song Lan leaped up from the spot, his eyes burning a crimson red as he lunged for the young cultivators, bloodlust swirling within his irises. Though he dashed past the group, instead heading straight for Wei Wuxian!

Lan Wangji instinctively inched forward, the urge to protect his husband as intense as the fire set aflame within his eyes. "Wei Ying!"

“Lan Zhan, I’m here, don’t worry.” Wei Wuxian placated, his hand tugging onto the Lan’s sleeve. “He didn’t really... *do anything*, he only wanted me to save Xiao Xingchen.”

“..truly?” Lan Wangji whispered.

“Truly.” Wei Wuxian nodded assertively, his contagious smile long since returned, “You’re so protective, Lan Zhan. But that’s what I love about you!”

“Love Wei Ying too.”

“Mmm~ I think I love you more, Lan Zhan.”

“No. Love Wei Ying lots.”

From within the corner, Jiang Cheng unconsciously shivered, feeling his hairs standing on end, “You know, I’d rather listen to Wen Chao and Wang Lingjiao than those two. It’s giving me goosebumps.”

“They aren’t *that* bad, Sect Leader Jiang.” Lan Xichen remarked with a smile.

Jin Ling attempted to unsheathe Suihua, but before he could, Wei Wuxian raised his hands in a placating manner and interjected, "Don't move, don't cause trouble. In terms of swordsmanship, all of us combined aren't a match for this... Song Lan."

“Look.” Whispered Li Daiyu. “Huaisang, Song Lan looks smug.”

“What?!” Remarked Huaisang, dramatically gasping into his hands. “The cold, distant, emotionless Song Lan.... is actually laughing at us in our faces?!”

Luo Qingqing excitedly added, “The wonders happiness does to us... I mean, look at Lan Wangji.” All eyes went to the Lan, who was busy cuddling and flirting with his husband. “Then think back to how he was when they were teenagers.”

Every individual glanced to the ceiling, their thoughts trailing back to the previous episodes.

“Wei Ying!!”

“Piss off!”

“Grrr, Wei Ying, that demonic gremlin!!”

Luo Qingqing’s thought bubble suddenly exploded, just as many others’ did at the same time, “Isn’t that Lan Qiren? I don’t remember Lan Wangji being that hotheaded.”

“You’re right... Lan Qiren was practically growling at Wei Wuxian every time he so much as smiled, the poor kid.”

"I wonder who the *true child* was between the two of them..."

The man dressed in black heartily laughed, a sound that made the juniors individually shiver, and waved his hand in a dismissive manner. "The adults are speaking, you kids run along now."

Wei Wuxian spoke calmly, even as the fierce corpse loomed behind him, holding a sword to his neck. "Go outside for now. You won't be able to help even if you stay, at the moment. The corpse poisoning power should have settled by now. Just don't go around kicking it up. Keep your breath calm."

Jin Ling startled, before pursing his lips in an angry pout and storming out of the room.

Jiang Yanli cooed, "A-Ling, were you worried for your Uncle Wei? How cute of you."

"Aww," repeated Jin Zixuan, briefly wondering how his wife picked up on such details. Because he certainly didn't.

"Sizhui," Wei Wuxian spoke. "You're the most mature one. Keep an eye on them; can you do that for me?"

"Yes." The youth replied.

"Don't be afraid."

Sizhui looked mildly surprised at Wei Wuxian's words, before his face broke into a fond smile. "I'm not... Senior, you really are quite like Hanguang-Jun."

Lan Wangji cocked an eyebrow in interest. *He thinks Wei Ying and I are alike?*

"I bet you it's the motherly instinct they both have," Commented Li Daiyu, resting her chin in a hand. "Because if it is, then I understand where he's coming from."

Wei Wuxian stared, shocked, as the Lan continued, "So long as one of you two are present, I know that there's no need to worry at all." He then turned to follow behind the group, closing the doors behind him with a click .

"What did I say?" Li Daiyu snickered.

'Am I really that similar to Lan Zhan?'

The man clothed in black snickered, throwing a small red pill into his mouth. "How touching."

"Indeed!" Wen Ruohan smiled in agreement. "How touching! Don't you just love father-son bonding moments?"

"I do," resolutely replied Li Daiyu. "Especially yours and Wei Wuxian's..."

At the man's bright grin, she couldn't help but think, '*I hit the nail right on the head.*'

Wei Wuxian deduced, "The antidote for corpse poisoning powder?"

"How'd he get that?" Yu Huizhong asked, his brows furrowed. "Could it be... he deliberately got poisoned so he could get close to Wei Wuxian?"

"No shit..." whispered a young Nie disciple in awe. "Never would I ever have thought that someone like Xiao Xingchen would even *think* of orchestrating such a cunning plan!"

"That's right. Much more effective than that terrifying bowl of congee you made, right? Plus, it's sweet."

Wei Wuxian crossed his arms with a huff, "He needs to learn to appreciate the food he's given. So ungrateful..."

Wei Wuxian sighed, "You really put on a show back there. From courageously jumping out to fight those walking corpses outside to blocking a sword for Jin Ling, was it a show put on just for all of us?"

The man held a finger to his mouth, as if to shush him, before waving it left and right to indicate that he was wrong. "Not a show for 'all of you', but a show for just 'you'. I've heard much about you, Yiling Patriarch, but words can't compare to meeting you in person. They don't know your identity, do they? So I had to make them leave. Well? Aren't I considerate?"

Someone within the crowd gasped, pointing an accusing finger at the screen. "He knows! He knows it's Wei Wuxian!"

"What do you think his aim was?"

"How did he know in the first place? If I was there, to be honest... that'd be the last conclusion I made."

"But... to threaten the Yiling Patriarch like this... It's like *asking* to die. This guy's gotta be kinda dumb."

"Well that's definitely *something*, coming from you."

Wei Wuxian idly brought his thumb to his mouth, chewing on the fingernail in concentration. "Are all the walking corpses in Yi city under your control?"

"All of the walking corpses? Just how powerful is this man?!"

"Didn't we already deduce that he's Xiao Xingchen? Then why is he so evil?"

"Are you that dumb or are you just pretending?"

"If I was, then you'd find me acting quite similarly to yourself, haha!" The man quickly fistbumped with the one seated beside him.

"Tch. Old people.."

"Of course," he replied. "Ever since you lot arrived, I thought you were rather strange, so I decided to test you myself. As I thought, only the creator would be able to use a low level technique like summoning of painted eye with such power."

Wei Wuxian asked, "So, what is it that you want from me, taking all those children as hostages?"

"Perhaps he wants to become Wei Wuxian's servant!" Someone deduced. "After all, every demonic cultivator respects the great Yiling Patriarch."

"Excuse me, what?" Xue Yang remarked, his hands itching to punch something. "Please repeat what you just said."

"Well, I thought that perhaps the man wanted to become Wei Wuxian's ser-"

"Hey! Who said he wanted to?!" Xue Yang spat, expression enraged. "For all you know, he could beat up the Yiling Patriarch in seconds!"

Lan Wangji sent the delinquent a warning glare.

"Hahaha! Beat up the Yiling Patriarch?" Old Liu chuckled. "Old Chang, this kid sure does have a sense of humour, ahah!"

"Indeed, indeed!" Old Chang snickered. "Old Liu, it turns out that I'm secretly a disciple of the great Jun Wu, hahahah!"

"You have my respect, your highness! Bahahaha!"

“What a funny kid, ey?”

“A funny one indeed.”

"I just want you to help me with something, senior. A very *small* something." The man rummaged through his pocket before presenting an intricately-embroidered pouch to Wei Wuxian.

'A spirit trapping pouch?', Wei Wuxian thought, accepting the item as it was placed into his hands.

“Could it be...” Xiao Xingchen’s eyes widened. “No... he wouldn’t.”

Song Lan snidely commented, “Oh, he would.”

Chapter End Notes

lmao sorry for the atrocity, I just wrote whatever came to mind-

Me: Telling myself to stop adding crack because it is completely pointless and terrifyingly boring to read.

Also me: OOC? Never heard the term, though I must just slot some in anyway....

Yizhuang VII - The Present

Chapter Summary

The not-so-mysterious man's identity is revealed!!

Chapter Notes

I was writing and didn't notice my brother standing behind me and reading the document. I want to crawl into a hole :)

Hello, everyone! My writer's block phase is finally passing, hooray! I decided to add more POV and depth to every character's thoughts in this chapter since before, it was just dialogue without context. I also worked my way through the story for once, whereas I usually just went back and added a few bits and pieces here and there. Currently sitting at my desk with a cup of tea in hand, and so motivated I could write the entire story! It is thanks to all of your support that I have made it here today, so I wish to tell you how grateful I am! Parts of this chapter just... idk it went somewhere, and turned super deep sometimes.. Apologies for that!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

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“Could it be...” Xiao Xingchen’s eyes widened. “No... he wouldn’t.”

Song Lan snidely commented, “Oh, he would.”

Wei Wuxian held the pouch in the palm of his hand as he observed it, before eventually turning a sharp gaze to the man's amused expression. "Whose soul is this? It's so fragmented, no amount of glue would be able to put it back together. It's barely hanging on by a breath."

Song Lan unconsciously shivered at his words, a multitude of emotions consisting of guilt, sadness, and most of all—*failure* overwhelming his senses. It reminded him of how he failed to save his best friend whom he had sworn to himself that he would protect ever since that day—the day *his* sight had *returned*, and *Xiao Xingchen's* was *lost*.

The man snickered, tilting his head in a taunting way, as if mocking Wei Wuxian's words. "If this person's soul was so easy to put back together, what would I need you for?"

At his words, Wei Wuxian couldn't push down the frown that befell his face. It was merely a reminder of the Patriarch he once was—the strong, unstoppable Yiling Laozu, the source of many Demonic Cultivators that roamed the world today, as well as their Patriarch and representative. He didn't particularly appreciate this title, but it had been plastered onto his chest many years ago by the world, as well as the many evil deeds he never committed.

Wei WuXian sighed, and with a heavy chest full of guilt, held out the pouch to return it to the man. "Sorry to be blunt, but there's too little of this person's soul in here. In addition, this person experienced some form of torturous pain before they left the world. They most likely took their own life, never wishing to return to this world."

He then added, with a more serious expression, “If a soul does not want to live, then they’ll be nigh impossible to save.”

Wei WuXian’s words felt like weights as they only added to Song Lan’s already-long-list of things he wished to repent for, but never could within his lifetime. If he could, he would have run to Baoshan Sanren’s mountain long ago, prostrate as low as his body would allow, and beg her to return Xingchen’s eyes until his throat was dry and hoarse. And yet, he was unable to do so; he was utterly powerless to do *anything*, even as Xingchen turned away from him and left to wander their separate paths. Even as Xingchen’s corpse was in the arms of the very man who killed him.

Xiao Xingchen didn’t need to look to see the confused expressions on the crowd’s faces. He knew that eventually, they would see the sins he had committed, the innocents he slaughtered, and the vile man whom he housed, fed, and protected of his own volition. They would see the ugliness within his heart that he tried so hard to cover up, and would condemn him just as they had done to his shijie’s pitiful son.

“If my guess is correct, the fragments of their soul here were put together by force, and if their soul ever left the spirit-trapping pouch, it could disperse and disappear at any time. You must realise this, too.”

Chu Rong’s face scrunched up in disgust as she watched the scene. “I never knew such revolting people live in this world.. The poor soul killed himself, wished for death and was forcefully trapped in the human world for some sick person’s selfish amusement. How disgusting.”

“Perhaps this man *isn’t* Xiao Xingchen,” Nie Huaisang helpfully commented. “Xiao Xingchen was a righteous man who would *never* think of orchestrating such a plot. I

personally think that someone is impersonating him...”

“You *do* have a good point there.. Perhaps you’re right.”

“I thought we all agreed long ago that this wasn’t Xiao Xingchen.”

The man’s eyebrows furrowed in obvious anger, and his voice lowered an octave as he spoke, “I don’t, and I don’t care. Even if you don’t want to or can’t help me, you still must. Don’t forget, senior, those children you brought with you are outside watching you, waiting for you to take them somewhere safe.”

“Because you threatened him with innocent children, you feel he is obliged to help you?” Luo Qingyang remarked with a snarl. “How deplorable.”

“Such hatred you bear for him, young miss,” Xue Yang snickered sarcastically. “But if he didn’t do that, how else would he have gotten what he wanted? What, should he have procrastinated before Wei Wuxian and presented him with gifts? This is merely the way of reality, child.”

“What a twisted way of thinking...” Jiang Fengmian commented quietly.

“You’re getting awfully defensive,” Chu Rong dryly said in a mutter. “To have such low morals, you don’t deserve to call yourself a cultivator.”

Wei Wuxian's demeanour faltered for a moment, unnoticeable to many, before he replied, "Xue Yang, you were fine with being a delinquent, what are you doing pretending to be a cultivator?"

Xue Yang then grinned as he pulled off the white cloth that covered his eyes, revealing the familiar face of the delinquent Xue Yang. "Hey, you caught me."

Xue Yang hummed in acknowledgement. "Not a bad entrance, if I do say so myself."

"You-!!" Lan Qiren pointed to the screen, aghast, "You-!!"

"But then..." Li Daiyu whispered with a hesitant tone, "If *he*'s Xue Yang... then where's Xiao Xingchen?"

Yu Huizhong mumbled, "So this whole time... Xue Yang pretended to be Xiao Xingchen, who pretended to be *not-* Xiao Xingchen, who pretended to be... a cultivator?"

Lan Jingyi shook his head in clear disappointment, a melancholic sigh escaping his throat as his eyes gazed upon Xue Yang. "That was really uncool, bro. *Really* uncool."

Xue Yang rolled his eyes with a huff. "What, how else would I have spoken to Wei Wuxian if not for disguising myself? Should I have gone " Oh hey, Yiling Patriarch who is pretending to be Mo Xuanyu but is terribly failing, and has stupidly gotten himself tangled into his enemies' affairs, nice to meet you! But anyways, I'm a wanted man called 'Xue Yang' and I was just wondering whether you could mend this suicidal, broken soul that I happened to have in my qiankun pouch? "

"No," Jingyi replied with a stern tone. "You should have given up on his soul in the first place—it clearly wanted to pass on in peace, and it was rather selfish of you to force it to stay within the world."

“When did *he* mature so much?” He could hear Jin Ling whisper from within the crowd.

“Selfish?” Xue Yang whispered in an almost yearning way, “No—It was *he* who was being selfish about- about *everything!* He ended his own life, without finishing what he started, yet you call *me* selfish? Little boy, your obliviousness is truly a surprise. Xiao Xingchen, he- he deserved even *worse* than death for what he did to me! Do you know how it feels to- to be *cared for* by someone who was trying to kill you just the day before? And then.. And then discarded the moment they see the *true you* ..!! I never liked Xiao Xingchen, no.. he was just a truly *immoral* man who disguised his own sins under the facade of ‘justice’.”

“What is considered as ‘immoral’ and what is *true* ‘justice’?” Lan Sizhui whispered, suddenly appearing from behind Lan Jingyi. “Is *evil* simply the harming of others? If so, then is harming others, but with the intent to *protect*, still evil? If not, then is harming just the ‘evil’ of this world considered *good*? ” His hands clenched form where they lay beside his hips, “My baba, Wei Wuxian—otherwise known as the Yiling Patriarch—killed only the *evil*, and *protected* the *good*. And yet he was labelled as *evil* himself, even though his heart was just... Xue Yang, do you really think you can decide for yourself what is right and what is wrong?”

“Tch,” Xue Yang tutted. “ ‘Course, it’s one of Hanguang-Jun’s. I don’t need your little *pep talk* about justice and righteousness. You prominent cultivators from rich clans are all the same—speaking about justice even though you’re naive to the dangers and horrors of the world. Truly hypocritical of you..”

Wei Wuxian spoke, “If it weren’t for the fact that you knew too much, could do too much that you shouldn’t, I might’ve really just taken you for Xiao Xingchen.”

Xue Yang replied, “Alright, cut the chatter, senior Wei. You have no choice but to help me.”

Ouyang Zizhen quietly said, “It’s scary when you think how we were just outside when this entire conversation occurred... Even when there was a fight, we had no idea..”

“That’s right,” Added Jingyi with a curious eyebrow. “Just what on *Earth* were we doing, I wonder?”

“Maybe grabbing sticks and vandalising every house in the city..” Jin Ling mumbled from the side. “And I mean *you lot*, by the way. Certainly *not* me or Sizhui because that’s a very *childish* and *irresponsible* thing to do.”

If Lan Wangji’s eyebrow couldn’t get any higher, then it would forever rest at the top of his forehead. His eyes spoke paragraphs, however, to the terrified juniors all huddling together in a makeshift circle.

“H- Hanguang-Jun, I- It was Jingyi-shixiong’s idea!!”

“Y- Yeah!! Blame Jingyi-shixiong!”

“You-” Lan Jingyi exclaimed, “Why must you pin it on *me*?! It was the little mistress’ Idea!”

“Don’t call me little mistress!” Jin Ling snapped, and then hurriedly added, “I only said it would be easier to find walking corpses if we could just turn the whole place upside down-!! I certainly did *not* encourage anything!”

Lan Sizhui chuckled, “Jin Ling, Jingyi, let’s not fight now. In the end, we were doing it for a good cause, right? I’m sure Hanguang-Jun wouldn’t be angry at us.”

“What’s that, Lan Zhan~?” Wei Wuxian snickered, “Are you softening your glare for our cute son? How cute of you, Hanguang-Jun!”

“You made the black nails controlling Song Lan and Wen Ning, yes?” Wei Wuxian remarked. “You can even restore half the stygian tiger amulet. Why would you need *me* to help you restore a soul?”

Xue Yang snapped, “It’s different. You’re the Pioneer, so of course you’re more skilled than I am. So what I can’t do, you must be able to do.”

“Why *should* he help you?” Yu Huizhong remarked. “You’re surely capable of it yourself, considering the many feats you’ve acquired thus far about demonic cultivation. And even if he *was* able to do what you wished, why *would* he? Xue Yang, the logic in your thoughts is clearly lacking.”

Xue Yang scoffed at the boy’s words, holding his head in his hands weakly. “Of course, you won’t understand. None of you would understand. Do you know what I *did* to get that far? I nurtured his soul day after day, attempting every technique I knew or could find, but to no avail... Of course I went to Wei Wuxian. Who else would I have gone to...?”

“While your sob-story is quite sympathetic to the ear,” Chu Rong replied. “It doesn’t justify the fact that you’re trying to tie a soul to the world. Do you know how abhorrent even the *concept* is?”

Wei Wuxian pondered, ‘Why is it that people I don’t know always have this unreasonable confidence in me?’

“You’re too humble—” Before Wei Wuxian could even finish, a large crash interjected his speech as the wall was brutally smashed into pieces. Through the mountains of smoke and rubble, however, stood the intimidating figure of Wen Ning, his eyes rolled to the top of his head as he made his way into the room.

“A-Ning!” Wen Qing cried. “You— didn’t your consciousness return? Why are your eyes like that?”

“T- They go like that when...” Wen Ning fumbled over his words. “When Young Master Wei has me under his control...”

Wen Qing inhaled a deep breath, trying not to snap at poor Wei Wuxian about the fact that he and her brother now had a master-servant relationship. *‘Remember, Wen Qing. It’s thanks to him that A-Ning is alive... today, even if he’s no longer human..’*

Xue Yang snickered as he dodged the large chain thrown in his direction by the fierce corpse, “Heh, you summoned the Ghost General while you were playing your flute just now, didn’t you?”

“He *did?*” Chu Rong exclaimed. “To think he planned so far ahead—! Wei Wuxian is truly amazing!”

“This is *why* you don’t underestimate Wei Wuxian,” Li Daiyu muttered, sending a threatening glance to the quivering crowd. “And to those who have been slandering him—rather—to *everyone*, need I remind you of *who exactly* the Yiling Patriarch is? Need I remind you of his power—the power he could have used to kill everyone here the moment they dared to speak against him?”

The room was silent, save for a few coughs from embarrassed participants of the slander.

Xue Yang immediately summoned Song Lan's fierce corpse to protect him from Wen Ning's advance, watching the two puppets fight as if it were an amusing display. "Fight outside, don't do any permanent damage. Keep an eye on the living people, don't let other walking corpses get too close."

Xue Yang then turned to the rightfully annoyed Wei Wuxian, "Who do you think will win?"

Wei Wuxian smirked in response, "Do you even need to ask? Wen Ning, of course."

Wen Ning's entire demeanour brightened in joy at his words, his smile greater than ever before, "Wei-gongzi!"

Wen Qing allowed herself a small smile at her brother's excitement, for it was a rare occasion that hadn't happened much since that unfortunate night on Qiongqi Way.

"Isn't he a bit confident in that fierce corpse?" Jin Zixun sneered. "I remember that face.. That timid dog is one of the Wens from the camp. He tried *so hard* to be a hero and sacrificed himself like an idiot. Good thing I put that weak boy in his place.."

The Jins beside him all nodded in agreement, each discussing the events that occurred in Qiongqi way, and how Wen Ning somehow came back to life all those years ago, and mercilessly slaughtered them all!

"It's a shame that he refused to listen even with all the nails I put in his head," Xue Yang remarked. "Some things are *too* loyal, and it makes them troublesome."

Wen Qing couldn't push down the sigh of relief that escaped her throat. Even the thought of her brother being controlled by such a horrible man irked her. If anyone, the only person whom she trusted with her and Wen Ning's lives was Wei Wuxian. And rather... she didn't like how Xue Yang spoke of her didi in such a... discriminating way.

Wei Wuxian frowned, his aura suddenly darkening. “Wen Ning isn’t a thing.”

“Haven’t you realised that your words—” Xue Yang spoke as he reached to unsheathe his sword and attack the Patriarch. “—Could be taken a different way?” [1]

“How disrespectful..” Lan Xichen muttered.

Wei Wuxian complained, “Do you often sneak attack people in the middle of a sentence?”

“Of course! I’m a delinquent!” Xue Yang replied with a wide grin. “It’s not that I want to kill you. I just want you to help me restore this soul.”

“Why is he so persistent?” Jin Zixuan remarked, sighing into a hand. “A-Xian already said that it’s beyond his ability, so there’s really no use of asking incessantly.”

Jiang Yanli nodded at her husband's words, sneaking a glance to the bored Xue Yang at the other side of the room, "A-Xian, he... He's always tried to live up to people's expectations, and make them proud, and wanted to feel like he's.. *worth something*." Her voice slowed into a weak whisper, "You may not see it, or notice it for that matter, but when there's something he's unable to do, he..."

Jin Zixuan gently pulled his wife into his arms, "A-Xian is a very strong person, that he is. He's very fortunate to have such caring siblings, hm?"

"I'm also very fortunate for having such a loving husband," Jiang Yanli softly smiled, "A-Xian has always been proud of our sect; especially the motto we often follow—'attempt the impossible'."

Jiang Fengmian's smile only deepened as he listened to his daughter's words. Yu Ziyuan, seated beside them, had a passive face (which wasn't even scowling in the slightest) as she, too, listened to Jiang Yanli.

"And when he came back after three months, I was so *so* happy..." Her eyes began to moisten with tears as she continued, "But... he had somehow changed. And yet at the same time, was still the same A-Xian I knew and loved.... I was so scared *for* him, A-Xuan... *I was so scared.*"

"I know," Jin Zixuan whispered, placing a soft kiss on her forehead. "I know."

Chapter End Notes

[1] The double meaning here is in Chinese. If you say something "isn't a thing" in Chinese it can mean you're saying they're a despicable person as well.

Author Notes:

I wrote this instead of studying for exam which is today, so like- respect

And omg chap. 238 of the manhua is just *chefs kiss*

Yizhuang VIII - The Present

Chapter Summary

Yi City arc continuation...

Chapter Notes

Just got back from school and I am sooo sorry concerning the repost this morning! I posted this chapter the second ao3's servers went down and then noticed that it was somehow? a repost?? that i didnt even do because I have the chapter name in the recently saved?? but couldn't delete it because the site kinda shut down <3 Here's the actual chapter, aha.

But I am so lucky that I pasted the chapter into a google doc in just the right time. I really cba to add all those page dividers again...

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Don’t be so quick to refuse. If you don’t know what to do, we can have a talk!” Xue Yang spoke as he attempted to pierce Wei Wuxian’s chest with his blade. “Look into it together.”

“What aspirations to have...” Ouyang Zizhen mumbled in awe. “You think Senior Wei will really dive into demonic cultivation with you? And even if he did, you think he’d... become your best friend and study-buddy?! This man has got to be insane!”

“You hadn’t already figured that?” Lan Jingyi muttered, sparing a glance to the grinning delinquent. “On that thought, please move yourself two metres away...”

Wei Wuxian cursed under his breath, “Are you trying to take advantage of this body’s low spiritual power?”

“That’s right!” Xue Yang voiced with a grin as he continued to attack Wei Wuxian, therefore slowly backing him into a corner.

‘Wow!’ Wei Wuxian thought sarcastically. ‘I finally meet someone who is even more shameless than I am!’

“Now isn’t *that* a surprise?” Jiang Wanyin commented sarcastically, sending a side glance to Lan Wangji. “Someone more shameless than Wei Wuxian? Wow, I never knew such a person existed.”

Lan Xichen rolled his eyes with a small smile, “Sect Leader Jiang, now, let’s be nice. Wangji doesn’t bite.”

Wei Wuxian couldn’t help but hear their conversation, for he was always interested in what Jiang Cheng had to say. At Lan Xichen’s words, however, he couldn’t push back the memory of Lan Wangji biting on his arm during their stay at Xuanwu cave...

“Lan Zhan, why *did* you bite me that day?” Wei Wuxian asked. “I now know that it wasn’t because of Mianmian, but you never did tell me, did you?”

“Mn,” Lan Wangji hummed, his eyes focused on the screen. “Doesn’t matter.”

“But Lan Zhan, your ears are red.”

Lan Wangji closed his eyes and bravely defended his honour, “Are not.”

“Uh—but Lan Zhan, I can see the very tips are turning red—”

“Ridiculous.” Lan Wangji huffed.

Wei Wuxian nodded slowly, exhaling a small chuckle. “Right, right, it’s definitely ridiculous. Of course the noble Hanguang-Jun wouldn’t do such a cute thing like blushing—oh! They’re *bright red* now!! Hahaha, Lan Zhan, I love you so much!”

“Offending a good person is better than offending a delinquent. You, in this case.” As soon as he spoke those words, Wei Wuxian ran for the door. “I’m not fighting with you, switch out!”

“...Really, Wei Wuxian?” Jiang Wanyin mumbled. “Who *with*?! Because Lan Wangji certainly isn’t there.”

Xue Yang snickered, “Switch out for who? That Hanguang-Jun? I’ll send over three-hundred walking corpses to surround him!”

“Oh really?” Lan Xichen smiled, staring straight through Xue Yang’s eyes. And if he had a cup of tea, oh *PLEASE*, would he be sipping it right about now.

Xue Yang shifted uncomfortably, which didn’t go unnoticed to Lan Jingyi, who was seated right beside him. “Oh, did no one tell you? Xue Yang, if you f ck with Hanguang-Jun, or even Senior Wei for that matter, then you f ck with the *whole . damn . world* times ten, bro.”

Xue Yang's words proved to contradict himself, for he was caught off guard when Lan Wangji suddenly appeared, a fluorescent blue light encompassing his mystic figure that was clad in overlapping layers of white. Before he could even react, Lan Wangji's hand outstretched in his direction, sending bichen flying straight for his head!

"And here is when you're proven wrong, Sect Leader Jiang," Lan Xichen said teasingly, smiling at the angry scowl on the other's face.

Xue Yang quickly retreated backwards with deft steps before striking back with the sword in which he held, successfully blocking the attack with a loud 'DING' produced as they clashed.

"Is this called—" Wei Wuxian said with a small grin. "Better to arrive just in time than to arrive early?"

Lan Wangji replied, "Yes."

"What is this newfound *humour* I see?" Li Daiyu mumbled with an appreciative nod. "Lan Wangji, you've really outdone yourself, haven't you?"

"He really has..." Nie Huaisang agreed. "I'm glad they both found clover.."

Lan Wangji once again attacked Xue Yang, but alas, the delinquent managed to block it with a second sword that he just recently unsheathed.

"Jiang-zai?" Lan Wangji muttered.

"What's that? Is it supposed to be his *sword*?" A junior Jin disciple commented.

"There's no way!" Another commented with a snicker, spreading their arms wide dramatically. "Jiang-zai: a sword of misfortune, bringing with it carnage and blood!"

That same junior disciple brought his hands together in applause as they cheered.

"Hm? Hanguang-Jun recognises this sword?" Xue Yang asked with a grin of his own as he expressed faux appreciation. "I'm truly honoured!"

Wei Wuxian pondered as they fought, 'Xue Yang can dual wield those two swords with such expertise?'

"Has he done it before?" Someone suggested.

“Of course he’s done it before,” another replied as they pointed to the screen. “If you look at his posture and stance, it just *screams* years of training, and *much* experience. I wonder why he even bothered to learn dual wielding...”

“Right, isn’t that so much effort? Just learning to use *one* sword is still hard, man.”

“Perhaps he had a reason behind it?”

“Oh!” A Jiang disciple exclaimed. “*Maybe* he used them to represent *two people*. You heard his passionate speech about how ‘ungrateful’ Xiao Xingchen was just now, no? What *I* think is that he’s using them as two—he wants the *noble* and *otherworldly* Xiao Xingchen to fight by his side, their friendship growing closer than ever before!”

“This isn’t one of your romance novels, shidi.”

“...Right, sorry.”

Lan Wangji turned to him and said, “Stand back. You aren’t needed here.”

Lan Wangji felt like he had to give Wei Wuxian an explanation for his rudeness, so he turned to his husband determinedly. “Was— was just concerned. Think Wei Ying is always needed here!”

“It’s fine, Lan Zhan,” Wei Wuxian smiled warmly. “I know that I was in the way, and you just wanted to fight without involving me. Thank you.”

On the other side of the room...

“Lan! Wang! Ji!” Wen Ruohan exclaimed. “That is such disrespect! Apologise to my son!”

“And he *finally* surfaces from the water,” Li Daiyu remarked. “My favourite Wen is back, I see, but would you mind telling me why the only time you’re interested in this is when something happens with WangXian?”

“Whenever something *interesting* happens, when *isn’t* it WangXian?” Wen Ruohan justified.

“True point there, true point..” she muttered.

“Would you prefer it if I spoke more often?”

“Quite.”

Wei Wuxian replied with much glee, “Got it~”

It was then however, that Lan Wangji’s sword began to emit an even brighter hue, illuminating both himself and the surroundings within the room. Xue Yang’s eyes narrowed in both anticipation and humiliation, ‘He was holding back?!’

“Discrepancies officially forgiven, Wangji, my boy!” Wen Ruohan exclaimed. “Kick that delinquent’s behind and—yeah, just like that!”

Lan Wangji’s eyes shone a molten gold as he leaped forward with one step, and knocked Xiao Xingchen’s sword from within Xue Yang’s grasp, immediately taking it for himself afterwards.

Xue Yang growled, “Give. That. Sword. Back.”

“Why?” Yu Huizhong challenged. “It’s not yours, and never has been. Rather, it was *stolen* by you. So why should it be returned?”

“Exactly!” Luo Qingqing exclaimed. “Listen to this guy! Don’t give him the sword back, Lan Wangji.”

Lan Wangji replied calmly, “You aren’t worthy of this sword.” Xue Yang only scoffed at his swords.

Xiao Xingchen smiled with gratitude at Lan Wangji’s comment, “Thank you for retrieving Shuanghua. It was right of you to say that it doesn’t belong in his hands...”

Song Lan nodded his head, following Xiao Xingchen’s statement. “I am grateful as well. I was unaware that he’d taken Shuanghua for his own.. *thank you so much for returning it to us.*”

Once again outside of the room, Wei Wuxian asked the disciples, “Everyone alright?”

“Yes,” Lan Sizhui answered. “We all listened to you and held our breaths.”

“Don’t you just *love* how they all consider him like their teacher and immediately follow his commands?” Luo Qingqing idly commented. “It’s very cute, if you ask me.”

Jin Ling muttered, “It was out of survival.”

“Oh really?” Lan Jingyi replied. “But I recall you telling us that you wanted ‘your uncle’ to go back home with you, hahaha!”

“That—that was because I thought he was- I thought he was..!!”

Jin Ling queried, “Hm? What’s that sound?”

“It sounds like a lot of people are approaching.”

“Cultivators, perhaps?”

“It’s either that or....” Yu Huizhong commented. “Fierce corpses...!!”

“People?” Ouyang Zizhen shivered at the sight of an entire colony of corpses walking in their direction. “There are only walking corpses here!”

Jin Ling gaped, “These are—Walking Corpses?!”

“Gahhhh!” Lan Jingyi wailed. “How can there be so many walking corpses?! Is it a corpse army?!”

“We love you, Jingyi.” A girl exclaimed with a slight chuckle. “Even at the worst of times, you’re still so funny!”

“Hear that?” Ouyang Zizhen said with a smirk. “Jingyi, looks like a few maidens are taking interest. Way to go!”

He didn’t comment on Lan Jingyi’s pink cheeks out of consideration.

And as soon as they appeared, the corpses were defeated in one swift strike by none other than the guqin Wangji. “It is Hanguang-Jun!”

With his other hand, he held bichen, which was brewing used to defend the delinquent Xue Yang’s attacks. At this sight, the juniors could only gape.

“What skill!”

“He’s qualified!” Wen Ruohan exclaimed.

“For what?”

“It’s a wonder he didn’t become chief cultivator...”

“Exactly! Who knew he was so strong?!”

“Um, we all did?”

“Not *some of us* because we were unfortunately *dead* at the time.”

“Oh... sorry, I guess.”

“He’s amazing!” Jin Ling gasped. “I’d always thought my two uncles were the two most powerful cultivators in this world. Who would’ve known Hanguang-Jun is this good, apart from his technique of silencing others and his cold temperament?”

At his words, the crowd broke into fits of laughter, some commenting on the young Jin’s humour.

“Little mistress, until now, I never realised you said that! Is that what you’ve thought of Lan Wangji this whole time?!”

“Oh dear..” Lan Xichen exclaimed with a chuckle. “Wangji, it appears you’ve earned quite the reputation amongst the juniors.”

Lan Wangji’s ears turned red in embarrassment. “Xiongzhang, no teasing.”

Lan Xichen replied, smiling, “But you let Wei Wuxian do it, do you not?”

“That’s Wei Ying..” Lan Wangji reasoned. “Mn.. that’s Wei Ying.”

There were stars in Lan Jingyi’s eyes as he exclaimed in excitement, “Of course Hanguang-Jun is strong. He just never likes to show it off. He is very low-key.” He then turned to Wei Wuxian for affirmation. “Right?”

Wei Wuxian pointed to himself in confusion. “Are you asking me? Why are you asking me?”

“Maybe because you’re like.. his..?” Li Daiyu said. “Wait, what *is* Wei Wuxian to Lan Wangji right now? In the eyes of the juniors, I mean.”

Luo Qingqing suggested, “A lunatic turned sane who ran around screaming during a night hunt, and actually beat the living backside out of a goddess statue, then claimed he loved their senior, only for their senior to take that same ‘lovesick’ person back to Cloud Recess with him and go on adventures hunting ghosts and corpses alike, solving mysteries and beating up bad guys together? Yes.”

“That... pretty much summarises it all,” Li Daiyu mumbled..

Lan Jingyi exclaimed, “Are you saying Hanguang-Jun is not strong?!”

Wei Wuxian replied, “Yes, strong.”

“Of course he is super strong!”

“His admiration for Hanguang-Jun is enviable..” a woman commented. “I wonder, with his reputation, just *how* Lan Wangji managed to gain such respect from these kids..”

Jin Zixun scoffed, “Lan Wangji this, Lan Wangji that; why is it *always* Lan Wangji?! He’s not even as good looking as me!”

“Dude, I forgot you were even there..” A Jin replied. “And are you *blind*? Oh dear, you must be blind *and* delusional, how pitiful..”

A slight smile blossomed on Wei Wuxian’s face as he declared, “He’s the strongest.”

Li Daiyu speechlessly clapped her hands with an expression that said ‘you see?!’ as she spoke, “He’s falling *hard*. And by hard, I mean *very hard*. ”

Across the room, if Lan Wangji’s gait didn’t scream *proud*, then Li Daiyu seriously needed to get her eyes checked out by a healer. “Do you *see* how smug he looks right now?! He’d give the bloody peacocks in LanlingJin a run for their money!”

“Ah.. love how you put two and two together there..”

“The ghost of the blind girl is here again!” Jin Ling spoke, motioning in the direction of the familiar tapping of bamboo.

“Let’s go. Follow the sounds of the bamboo pole!” Wei Wuxian instructed. “She clearly wanted to tell us something important last night. She disappeared the moment Xue Yang came, so she was probably hiding from Xue Yang.”

“Xue Yang?” Lan Jingyi asked. “Why is Xue Yang here too? Was it not Xiao Xingchen and Song Lan?”

“Wow, he is *so* behind...”

“But didn’t we just find that out, what, like, ten minutes ago? What are you saying *that* for? Besides, if you think about it, he found out years ago, when it *actually* happened.”

“Dude, chill.. I just made a small comment, why are you on my case so much?”

“Uh, I’ll explain this later.” Wei Wuxian replied slowly, “Anyways, the one fighting with Hanguang-Jun inside isn’t Xiao Xingchen, but is instead Xue Yang who was pretending to be him. Let’s go for now.”

“I love how he just says that so nonchalantly...”

He then cupped his hands over his mouth and yelled, “Hanguang-Jun, I’ll leave it to you. We’re gonna go ahead!”

As soon as he spoke, the sound of the guqin resounded around the area. Wei Wuxian stifled a laugh as he realised, ‘Lan Zhan is telling me “Mn”!’

Lan Xichen couldn't help but tear up at his little brother's action. “Wangji, you are...”

Lan Qiren, too, looked like he thought his nephew was very adorable, for his scowl had miraculously disappeared!

“Lan Zhan...” Wei Wuxian sniffed. “I remember this. You're so cute, I love you so much words can't explain it!”

“I love you too, Wei Ying.”

“I love you *more!*”

“Love Wei Ying more.”

“Aside from the public display of affection...” Chu Rong mumbled. “That is the cutest thing I've seen in *years*. Does anyone have a handkerchief? I would like a handkerchief, please—oh, thank you.”

As they ran in the direction of the bamboo pole's sound, Lan Jingyi asked, “That's it? You're not going to say anything else?”

Wei Wuxian replied, “What else do you want me to do? What else do I need to say?”

“Oh no...” Lan Jingyi turned red in the face as he realised what was to come. “Oh dear....”

“Why did you two not say—” Lan Jingyi cleared his throat as he pulled out his cutest puppy eyes and exclaimed, “I'm worried about you. I'm staying!—Just go!—No! I'm not going! If I'm going, you're going with me!” At the display, Wei Wuxian could only snort in amusement. “Is it not a must?”

The group of girls stalling in the background could only share hushed whispers between one another excitedly.

“It looks like we have a new member!”

“It's about time someone realised how Wangxian were acting like a married couple..”

“How should we scout this kid? Where is he?”

“I think he's guarding that delinquent Xue Yang... the poor child is probably getting eaten alive!”

“Then how can we rescue him?”

“That’s the problem! It would be impossible to rescue him from that demon’s evil claws!!”

“Lost member, I pray for your safety!”

“We pray for your safety!” Many other girls repeated.

“...” Wei Wuxian face palmed helplessly, his expression following the traumatised Lans behind. “Who taught you all that?”

Soon afterwards, A-Qing led the group to a coffin home surrounded with damp mist, its roof darkened by age. Within the house was a coffin, in which A-Qing instructed them to open. Inside of the coffin, however, was a corpse: It was a young man placed to rest, hands together over a horsetail whisk against his stomach. He was dressed in snow white daoist robes and the features of the bottom half of his face were handsome but elegant; his skin a deathly pale, lips near colourless. The upper half of his face was wrapped in layers and layers of bandages, missing the protrusion that should be created by his eyes. Instead, the bandages there sunk in hollowly. There were no eyes there, just two empty sockets.

“He’s really pretty, don’t you think?”

“Wait, isn’t that...?“ A Nie disciple exclaimed, glancing at Xiao Xingchen across the room.
“It’s Xiao Xingchen!!”

“No way! This is his corpse?!“

“So he was dead the whole time...?!”

“I figured everyone already knew that..”

“Xingchen, are you alright?” Song Lan asked, holding his best friend by the shoulder.
“You... you’ve just seen your corpse, that is a most unpleasant thing to witness.”

“I...” Xiao Xingchen swallowed, closing his eyes with a small smile. “I’m perfectly fine. ”

“This is—” Wei Wuxian startled at the sight of tears of blood streaming down A-Qing’s eyes. Because the corpse laid before them was the *real* Xiao Xingchen.

**“AAAAH AHHHH!!” A-Qing hysterically screamed, her face a tirade of emotions.
“AAAHHHH!! AHHHH!!”**

“A-Qing..!” Xiao Xingchen exclaimed, instinctively reaching out towards the screen. He then turned his gaze to the present-day A-Qing with a sigh. “Sorry, A-Qing.. You suffered a lot—if only I wasn’t so *foolish* back then..!”

“It’s okay..” A-Qing whispered. “We got our revenge in the end, didn’t we? Everything went okay..”

Lan Jingyi muttered solemnly, “It seems like she has a lot she wants to tell us...”

Lan Sizhui suggested, “Should I play inquiry again?”

“No need,” Wei Wuxian replied. “I think her answer will be complicated–too hard to explain and interpret.”

“Then what should we do?” Lan Jingyi asked.

Wei Wuxian inhaled a deep breath before exclaiming, “Empathy.”

Lan Wangji jumped out of his seat so quickly that it startled all of who were near him, “... Wei Ying!!”

Wei Wuxian nervously chuckled, “Ahaha, Lan Zhan, I must have forgotten to tell you...”

“Wei Ying, you...” Lan Wangji looked *hurt*. “ *Why didn’t you tell me ?*”

“Because...” Wei Wuxian muttered, avoiding all possible eye contact. “I thought it wasn’t necessary.”

“Do you not trust me..? Wei Ying, I am your *husband*, you can *rely* on me.”

“I know..” Wei Wuxian whispered. “And I’m sorry..”

Lan Wangji stared at his face for a moment before he sighed, pulling the other into a hug. “Don’t carelessly run into danger like that. I love you too much to lose you again.”

“*I’m sorry, Lan Zhan...*”

Jin Ling looked at Wei Wuxian with despair in his eyes, his lips quivering as he yelled, “That’s far too dangerous! A dark technique like that, there’s no...”

Jiang Yanli smiled, “A-Ling, it’s very sweet of you to be concerned for A-Xian. I always knew you’d grow up into a good boy.”

“Good boy?! ” Jin Ling spluttered, his cheeks flaming red. “A-Niang, I’m not a child! ... Besides, It’s not like I was concerned. I just didn’t want him to die, that’s all.”

Jin Zixuan grinned, “Isn’t that the same thing? A-Ling, you were totally concerned!”

“I was *not*!!”

Li Daiyu asked, “What is Empathy?”

Yu Huizhong furrowed his eyebrows in bewilderment, “Do you not know?”

“I doubt they’d tell, let alone teach, junior cultivators about such techniques.” Wen Ruohan reasoned. “Why don’t you explain it to her?”

Yu Huizhong nodded once more as he spoke, “Empathy is the offering of a spirit to possess oneself, and using one’s own body as a medium to infiltrate the spirit’s memories and soul, hearing what they heard, seeing what they saw, feeling what they felt. If the spirit’s emotions were abnormally strong, then the possessed would be affected by those emotions, thus, it was known as ‘Empathy’.”

“Okay..?” Li Daiyu remarked. “I kind of understand it, but why was Lan Wangji freaking out like that? Shouldn’t this be a good thing?”

Yu Huizhong replied, “That’s because although Empathy is the most direct, most efficient, and easiest out of all the methods one could use to gain information from a spirit, it is also the most dangerous.”

“*Oh... thanks for explaining.*”

Wei Wuxian shook his head dismissively, “It’s alright, we don’t have much time. Get in position, hurry! After we’re done, we still have to go back and find Hanguang-Jun.” He then turned to Jin Ling. “Jin Ling, you act as supervisor. Did you bring the silver bell?”

Jin Ling replied with a slight flush to his cheeks, “Yeah...” He removed the bell from within his sash and held it out for Wei Wuxian to see.

“Why does Wei Wuxian need that bell for Empathy? Does it hold some significance or something?”

“I think it’s a Jiang thing,” Another replied. “Ask them.”

“Well... the Clarity Bell is a signature accessory we of YunmengJiang Clan wear... it has the ability to calm and clear people’s minds.”

“Then why does Wei Wuxian need it?”

“He probably needs it incase the spirit’s emotions are too overwhelming. My guess is that it will act as the code, although I could be wrong.”

As he saw the bell, however, Wei Wuxian’s eyes hazed over with familiarity. A memory appeared on the screen from long, long ago, when Wei Wuxian was still the Yiling Patriarch and was speaking to Wen Ning, the same bell in his hand. ‘So long as my nephew wears this silver bell, no weaker ethereal creatures will be able to approach him.’

Jin Zixuan gasped at the sight, instantly recognising the bell Wei Wuxian held in his hand.
‘So that was it...’

Noticing his trance, Jin Ling asked, “What’s wrong?”

“It’s nothing,” Wei Wuxian replied. “Use it as the code.”

Jiang Wanyin slowly lowered his head, his fists clenched as they rested on his lap. To prevent the person undergoing Empathy from getting lost in the spirit’s emotions, they needed to set a code with the supervisor. The code was best as a sentence or a sound the person undergoing Empathy was very familiar with. If the supervisor realised something was going wrong, they were to act immediately and pull the one undergoing Empathy out.

The fact that Wei Wuxian suggested using the clarity bell as the code, made him feel a sense of... accomplishment?

“He should be fine, right?” Luo Qingqing quietly spoke. “Wei Wuxian is alive now, and looks perfectly healthy, so it must have gone fine.”

“I’m ready,” Wei Wuxian turned to the girl who was coming from behind the corner, wiping her bloodied face with a hand. She ran straight through Wei Wuxian’s chest, her spirit intertwining with his own. Wei Wuxian suddenly went limp and fell to the ground, although was quickly caught by the juniors and placed into a comfortable position beside some straw.

His eyes swirling with countless emotions, Jin Ling unconsciously clenched the bell within his palm tighter.

The screen faded into black.

As the viewers watched the episode come to an end, they all tensed with anticipation for what was to come. Would Wei Wuxian breeze through it, or would he exit eventually, although not in one piece?

“He’s the Yiling Patriarch, of course he’ll have no trouble!”

“I wouldn’t be so sure about that...”

Chapter End Notes

Let's go!!! Finally empathy smh, it only took a year. I actually started writing empathy like 6 months ago for fun and out of boredom, so I already have less to write ahahah-

Also I woke up at like 3am to write this chapter and was half asleep so that's why it's so bad :))

Empathy I - The Present

Chapter Summary

And so empathy begins!!

Chapter Notes

This chapter is literally 6,000 words and I've never written one so long. What a surprise.. You do not know how many hours of work this took. I wrote it at home, in the car, at my nan's... yeah, literally everywhere. But anyways, I think it was worth it, producing such a long chapter!

Also, happy father's day to every dad out there! xx

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“*Lan Jingyi!*” A furious voice reverberated within the room.

“Uhm.... yes?” The mentioned Lan sheepishly replied.

Li Daiyu placed her hands on her hips and she scolded, “You!”

“....I, what?”

“Why are you beside the platform?”

“...Maybe because I need to use my godly pow—I mean resurrect someone again..”

“Yes, but you did the *last* one. It is rightfully *my* turn now!”

“What about me..?” Ouyang Zizhen weakly raised a hand.

“Sheesh..” Lan Jingyi grumbled under his breath. “Fine, fine, but I’m next.”

Ouyang Zizhen whispered, “Hello?”

“Okay, let’s see...” Li Daiyu mumbled as she observed the four symbols. As expected, one had turned into a dark shade of grey, indicating that they could not select that one once again. She instead pondered over the Wen, Lan, Jiang, and Nie motifs shining brightly in each corner. The Wen’s was a red sun, the flames representing their might and power; the Lan’s was a beautiful blue cloud, shrouded with mist of the same colour; the Jiang’s was a purple

Lotus, beautifully designed with petals gracefully curved towards the middle; The Nie's was the head of a beast, as intimidatingly wild and fierce as the clan members themselves.

She hummed in thought for a moment before selecting the Jiang Motif [**Purple Lotus**]. The Platform then displayed a screen of two options: [**Character one**] and [**Character two**].

Li Daiyu pressed [**Character one**] before stepping back with a practised motion as a blinding white light enveloped the room.

Stepping out from within that light, however, were two fair maidens, both their appearances and bearing uncannily similar; their robes a dark shade of lavender covered by a layer of armour. One was half an inch or so taller than the other, and had an expression of coldness on her face. As Li Daiyu saw these two beautiful women, she couldn't help but gasp in awe.

Lan Jingyi expressed a noise of confusion as he asked Wei Wuxian, "Senior Wei, who are they?"

"They are..." Wei Wuxian felt his jaw drop. "*Jinzhu and Yinzhu!*"

The moment he said those words, the two pairs of eyes immediately snapped to him, expressing silent familiarity, before once again searching the room. The twins probably found what they were searching for, for they immediately disregarded him and pushed their way into the crowd.

"Jinzhu, Yinzhu!" A voice belonging to Madame Yu exclaimed.

"Mistress!" The two twins replied, and Wei Wuxian held up his hands in defeat because he did *not* want to eavesdrop on their conversation. God knows what accusations Madame Yu would throw at him if she saw him listening... Besides, it wasn't like he *liked* the Zhu twins anyway, because he was so sure that they'd always been acting as Madame Yu's spies in Lotus Pier and had been *spying* on him... although there was no evidence of it, a hunch had told him as such.

Wei Wuxian seated himself beside Jiang Yanli and said, "Shijie, Madame Yu looks really happy to see them, doesn't she?"

"She does.." Jiang Yanli whispered fondly. Seeing her mother look so happy was a rare sight, so she was inevitably smiling at the image.

"Hey, Senior Wei!" Lan Jingyi exclaimed. "Look, another episode is starting!"

What the young Lan said was indeed true, for on the screen, large text had once again appeared. [**Episode Eight (第八集)**]

The episode on the screen began with that of a rushing riverbank, surrounded by a large forest and vast fields of greenery, with countless rocks and stones creating a path in between. Sitting upon a rock within the river was a young maiden who was happily humming to herself as she splashed her bare feet into the river. This girl—who was

revealed to be A-Qing—tucked a lock of stray hair behind her ear as she stared at her beautiful visage through the river.

Nie Huaisang paused for a moment before quietly commenting, “That is clearly the look of someone who’s blind, but... Right now Wei-Xiong and us can see, can’t we?”

“Maybe we can see what she *can’t*?” A young Jin disciple suggested. “I mean, I didn’t really expect it to just be darkness, if you get what I mean?”

From the side, Ouyang Zizhen looked ready to weep tears. “I just *knew* she’d be pretty! It’s such a shame she died..”

A-Qing smiled to herself once more before patting down her knees, slipping on her brown boots and grabbing the long bamboo stick that was down on the stone beside her. She skipped along the path with a joyful manor, her bamboo stick held tightly within her hand, although not touching the floor once.

“Yeah, she can definitely see...” Li Daiyu pursed her lips. “Looks like she was just born with white pupils..”

“Then why was her spirit blind before?” Chu Rong asked. “And to be born with white pupils... that’s something I never would have thought of.”

As soon as she reached civilisation, A-Qing idly stood in the middle of the path as she brought her skip into a pause. She shakily reached out her hands, the bamboo stick now guiding her as she traversed the streets.

Lan Jingyi gasped, “Is that... Yi City?!”

“There’s no way!” Ouyang Zizhen exclaimed, “There’s so many people, and it’s just so... *alive!* Yi City is a barren wasteland; there’s no way this is it.”

“I suppose you have a good point,” Jin Ling replied. “It’s always possible that she lived somewhere else when she was alive, and just recently moved to Yi City. How did you come to that conclusion anyway, Jingyi?”

“I..” Lan Jingyi whispered. “Well, I recognised a few of the houses, since.. you know, there was nothing else to do while waiting for Senior Wei to speak with Xiao- Xue Yang..”

“What a pity,” A sympathetic person whispered among the crowd within the streets.

“She’s blind at such a young age..” Another added hesitantly.

Wen Ruohan's eyebrows shot to the roof as he blankly stared at the screen, obvious confusion etched into his features.

Lan Jingyi simply had a look that said, "???"

A young woman, whose expression was that of pity, approached A-Qing, holding a freshly-baked meatbun. "Sister, be careful. Are you hungry? Take this and eat it."

A-Qing flusteredly waved her hands in refusal, "Oh, how could I? I- I.."

"....There's no way.." Li Daiyu said. "Nobody would be *that* shameless, right?"

"I don't know, but it seems pretty likely to me," Luo Qingqing replied. "There's never been a limit to how shameless people can be.. I learned that after witnessing Wei Wuxian as a youngster..."

"Take it!" The young woman stubbornly shoved the meat bun which she held into A-Qing's hesitant palms.

A-Qing bowed her head gratefully, "Sister, A-Qing is very grateful to you!" She ate the entire meat bun before happily skipping along the path, humming to herself along the way.

"Well, isn't she full of energy?" Wen Ruohan commented, his eyebrows still on the roof.

"I get it now..!!" Lan Jingyi exclaimed. "A-Qing is pretending to be blind so she can guilt-trip others!"

"You don't have to put it like that, you know.." The mentioned girl pouted as she spoke. "I wasn't really guilt-tripping people..."

A-Qing calmly switched to her unfortunate, blind persona as she walked into the large crowd once again.

"Again," Luo Qingqing remarked. "Her spirit is *truly blind*. That means she lost her eyesight *before* she died."

Li Daiyu murmured, "Then how did she go from pretending to be blind to being *actually* blind? That's quite the misfortune she has there, if you ask me."

"I'm sorry! I'm sorry!" She hastily apologised as she fell into a wealthy, Loutish-looking man, "I can't see, I'm sorry!"

"Watch where you're going!" He berated furiously.

A-Qing bowed in apology, "I'm sorry!"

Sect Leader Yao exclaimed, "She can't see?! She clearly ran right into the man! How shameless!"

The man sent her a cunning smirk before raising a hand and sending a harsh slap to her buttocks!

"Um..." Li Daiyu mumbled darkly, "Huizhong, would you remind me of the rules of Empathy?"

Yu Huizhong replied slowly, "During empathy... the caster can feel the same sensations as the spirit... which means..."

"Which means that he just..!! He technically slapped my son!" Wen Ruohan exclaimed, prepared to stand up and cause a scene. Before he could, however, Lan Wangji had beaten him to it and was already glaring at the screen furiously! His hands were clenched into two tight fists, eyes narrowed so thinly that he looked ready to murder someone that very second.

"Wangji..." Lan Xichen murmured, a nervous sweat breaking out. "Wangji, it happened long ago, and wasn't even direct--"

"Xiongzhang."

"....Yes, Wangji?"

Lan Wangji closed his eyes as he spoke, "Xiongzhang, is it possible to locate that man--"

"Wangji, you cannot hurt a man you have only seen, not met--"

A-Qing somberly walked away, "Uwaah, sorry.."

Recalling the unwanted sensation, Wei Wuxian unconsciously shivered. '*AAAAAHHH! I wish I could stomp that man into the ground!!*'

By the looks of it, Lan Wangji desired the same thing.

Once she was far away from the man, A-Qing clicked her tongue in distaste. She held out the money pouch she had just stolen and began to count the coins in a palm, "These dumb men are all the same, all dressed like they're something, but don't even have a penny on them. Won't even make a clang if you clutch it tightly."

Jin Zixuan quietly commented, "...She's only a teen, yet she's mastered the art of cursing, and pick-pocketing comes even more naturally.. It's no wonder her spirit was strong enough to tie itself to the world for so long."

Li Daiyu sighed, "Young lady, pickpocketing won't get you anywhere—knowing wealthy young masters these days, he'd probably come running back for your head!"

"Exactly," Chu Rong agreed. "Didn't Xue Yang mention how a noble ran their carriage over his hand simply because of a few insulting documents?"

Luo Qingqing shook her head solemnly, "What has happened to society these days...?"

"Ah!" A-Qing exclaimed as she purposely bumped into another man, who was clad in a luxurious white the colour of snow, and had a cloth of the same colour covering his eyes. "Sorry, sorry. I can't see, I'm sorry!"

Nie Huaisang, who began to get frustrated by the repeated scene, snapped, "Hey! Are you not even gonna change your lines, little beauty? If you're stealing someone's money, then a cultivator is *certainly* not the one to steal from—That's just begging for death!"

"I agree with you, but how was she supposed to know it was a culti—OH, is that who I think it is?"

"I believe so..."

"I'm fine. Young Lady, are you blind as well?" The man asked as he placed a hand on her shoulder to steady her.

At the sight of such a kind and compassionate man, an embarrassed blush arose on A-Qing's cheeks, "Ah! Ye.. Yes!"

The cultivator gently held her hands and helped her to stand, "Then slow down, don't walk too fast. It's not good if you run into people."

"It's Xiao Xingchen!" Chu Rong exclaimed.

Xiao Xingchen took A-Qing by the hand and gently led her to another part of town, where it wasn't as crowded. "Here. This way, there are fewer people."

"A-Qing thanks big brother!" She grinned, eyes sparkling with admiration as they gazed upon Xiao Xingchen.

"What a gentleman.." A woman voiced. "If only my husband were like that—compassionate, strong, handsome.."

A man standing beside her had an incredulous look as he yelled, "Hey! So you think I'm neither of those things?!"

"Well, I mean... She isn't wrong," Another commented.

"Not big brother," Xiao Xingchen corrected. "Daozhang." [1]

A-Qing simply grinned cheekily at his words, "It's Daozhang and it's big brother!"

"Since you call me big brother," Xiao Xingchen smiled, "Then why don't you return big brother's coin pouch?"

A-Qing was taken aback, for she almost jumped out of her skin at his words. "Ah!"

"*And* she's dead. She's so dead."

"*This* is precisely why you don't steal from rich, cultivator-looking people."

Lan Jingyi remarked mournfully, "No matter how fast a mortal is, they can't trick a cultivator's senses."

Ouyang Zizhen nodded, feeling quite sympathetic for the girl. "Looks like she kicked a wall this time."

She gripped her bamboo pole tighter as she turned around with a speed known to few, and began to run away. Before she could even take a step, however, she was suddenly grabbed by her collar and pulled back.

"Let go of me! Let go of me!" She squirmed.

Xiao Xingchen spoke, "I told you not to run so fast, what if you crash into someone again?"

"He's such an angel..." Luo Qingqing murmured. "Instead of scolding or beating her for stealing his money, he's concerned for her safety!"

"Have you not considered that he's just being sarcastic?"

"But he's so *kind*, and most of all, *handsome!* Why *wouldn't* you think only the *best* of him at all times?!"

Nie Huaisang mumbled, "I swear you girls only like people for their looks.. how many men is that now? Three? Four?"

“Aiyahhh!” Li Daiyu grinned, nudging Nie Huaisang playfully in the ribs. “Huaisang, admit that you’re jealous! Don’t worry; you’ll always be handsome in my eyes!”

“That’s very nice of you, even if you’re saying that because of pity.. thanks, Li-Guniang...” Nie Huaisang replied.

Before any of them had time to react, the man from A-Qing's previous encounter came running towards them both with an intimidating fist raised in the air, "You little bitch, I got you now! Give me back my money!"

“Aaaaand he’s back...” Li Daiyu said. “Don’t say I never warned you.”

A young junior exclaimed, “*This* is why you don’t target *rich* people!!”

“Are you justifying the pickpocketing of the poor?”

“...No, but I’m just pointing out the obvious as to how much *easier* it would be.. at least they won’t come after you like an angry concubine whose face just got slapped..”

The man's wrist was immediately caught by Xiao Xingchen in a tight grip, "Calm yourself, sir. This is no way to treat a Young Lady."

The man tried to pull his wrist away but to no avail, "You damn eyeless freak, who do you think you are, playing hero?!"

A-Qing turned away from the man, fear overwhelming her as she buried her face in Xiao Xingchen's robes, trying not to listen as the wealthy man exclaimed in anger, "She stole my money coin pouch! If you're helping her, you're a dirty thief too!"

“He *isn’t* helping her, though... he didn’t even know she stole your money..” A Jiang disciple mumbled.

Xiao Xingchen furrowed his eyebrows and sent a stern look to A-Qing. “Give the man back his money.”

A-Qing fretfully reached into her sash, fumbling as she finally found it and held it out to the man, who immediately snatched it from within her grasp. He didn’t spare them another word as he angrily stormed away.

Wen Ruohan smiled, deciding to point out the bright side of the situation, “Hey, at least she wasn’t beaten unconscious, right?”

The silence following his statement was deafening to the ears.

“Please don’t talk again...”

“Yeah, please don’t...”

Xiao Xingchen remarked, “You’re way too daring. You can’t see, yet you’re going around pickpocketing.”

“He still thinks she’s blind even after all of that?!” Yu Huizhong exclaimed. “What blind *mortal* could pickpocket that smoothly?! Not everyone is a cultivator like you!”

“Yeah, she’s also a *little girl* at that..”

A-Qing’s lips slightly pulled into a pout as she replied, “He touched me! He pinched my butt, it really hurt, so what if I charged him a little for it!”

Ouyang Zizhen said, “Need I remind you how you stole it *before* he... you know, touched your buttocks..”

“I don’t think that’s really the point here, but okay..”

“If there were no one here today, a slap wouldn’t be the end of it,” Xiao Xingchen began to walk away as he finished, “Young Lady, you should be more careful.”

A-Qing ran after his disappearing figure as she exclaimed, “Hey, wait, I still have your coin pouch!”

She eventually caught up to Xiao Xingchen and spread her arms to prevent him from moving. “Wait!”

Xiao Xingchen smiled, “You can keep it. There’s not much anyways. Don’t go pickpocketing again until you’ve spent it all.”

“This senior is quite the gentleman!” Lan Jingyi exclaimed in admiration. “He’s sacrificing his money just so she can buy her own keep! How inspirational!”

“But I doubt it would last very long. He said so himself, didn’t he?”

A-Qing persisted, “I’ll come with you!”

“Why?”

“You’re blind, so am I,” she reasoned. “If we stick together, we can take care of each other. It won’t take me long to spend all of this money, then I’ll go around stealing and

cheating again, and then I'll get slapped around for it and won't be able to find my way. Poor me!"

Xiao Xingchen replied, "With your cunning, it's you who'd have others led around by the nose, unable to find their way, who can beat you until you can't find *your* way."

A-Qing whined, "Ah, just let me follow you! I'll be good!"

"It's dangerous, following me, you should stay away.." Xiao Xingchen sighed.

"I don't mind!"

As he observed the scene, Wen Ruohan smiled and slowly clapped his hands together in applause. "That Xue Yang's act just now was amazingly similar to the real Xiao Xingchen! From the kindness to the condescending morality; apart from appearance, every other aspect and detail was masterfully displayed!"

"How could he know Xiao Xingchen so well to reenact his personality so perfectly?" Jin Zixuan murmured. "Could it be that Xue Yang knew Xiao Xingchen personally?"

"That sounds very possible.." Jiang Yanli nodded at her husband's words. "I heard them converse earlier, and couldn't help but feel like something was *off*... like Xue Yang was *taunting* Xingchen-Daozhang in a way..."

"Well..." Jin Ling replied slowly. "I suppose we'll have to find out."

In the following days, A-Qing wandered freely with Xiao Xingchen. Night hunting when the opportunity came and heading over whenever they heard of any strange occurrences.

Watching the cutscene come to pass, Xiao Xingchen allowed a small smile to slip onto his face. He missed the old days when it was only he and A-Qing; when they'd spend their days together, living in their humble abode and chatting like old friends.

He *missed* A-Qing's company—when they were *happy*, and before everything went. **wrong**.

That was until... they came upon a person with very heavy injuries.

A-Qing stared at the body blankly, before speaking, "Has he died? Should we dig a hole and bury him?"

"Uh..." Ouyang Zizhen raised an eyebrow as he crossed his arms, pointing an index finger at the screen. "Is she..? Not scared or anything?"

"Maybe she's seen someone looking so injured before?"

“So you’re saying that some random, bloodied John Doe’s are commonly seen in that town?” Ouyang Zizhen deadpanned, his head nodding in faux understanding. “Yeah, okay, makes a lot of sense.”

“He hasn’t died yet, he’s just very badly injured. Let’s bring him into the city.” Xiao Xingchen replied as he examined the body and hauled it over his back.

A-Qing simply pouted in response.

“Hey… doesn’t this road look familiar?” Lan Sizhui mumbled.

“Yeah,” Jin Ling replied. “This road seems so familiar!”

Ouyang Zizhen exclaimed, “Isn’t this the same path we took when we came to Yi City?”

“It is!”

Lan Jingyi haughtily laughed, his chest vibrating as he did so. “I was right!! I told you all that it was Yi City! And yet you didn’t believe me!”

“Yes, yes, Jingyi, you’re right. You’re always right. We know, we know, no need to boast.” Ouyang Zizhen grumbled under his breath.

When they had finally returned to their abode, Xiao Xingchen gently laid down the body on a bed and said to A-Qing., “A-Qing, can you try and boil some water for me? Be careful not to burn yourself.”

After a few moments, A-Qing returned with a large bowl of steaming water. “The water’s ready.”

“Good,” Xiao Xingchen replied. He rolled up his sleeves, dipped a cloth into the water and began to wipe down the body’s wounds.

The moment the blood was cleaned from the face, Lan Jingyi’s blood went cold. “Ah! It’s- It’s Xue Yang!”

“Indeed it is!” Xue Yang smirked.

Li Daiyu theorised, “Could it be that *this* is how Xue Yang observed his personality?”

“Yeah! Xiao Xingchen can’t see, so he doesn’t know *who* it is he’s rescuing!”

An unspecified girl said from within the crowd, “Hey, Xue Yang’s not bad looking.”

Qin Su sighed, “You always bump into those who you least want to, Xiao Xingchen, you truly are… extremely misfortunate.”

She'd met him once or twice, due to the fact that he was a prominent cultivator and she was from an influential family. He was very considerate, and thoughtfully put everyone's needs before his own. Due to this, Qin Su had developed both an understanding and mutual respect for him.

Sect Leader Yao observed, "This should be a while after Jin Guangshan passed, and when Clan Leader Jin—Jin Guangyao—took the position of Chief Cultivator."

"He is no longer Clan Leader *Jin*," Lan Jingyi fumed. "That position was taken long ago by Jin Ling!"

"Then..." Nie Huaisang commented. "Xue Yang's injures must have come from escaping Jin Guangyao's "purge"

"What *purge*?"

"Oh, you don't want to know, haha..."

"Urgh..." Xue Yang groaned. His eyelashes slowly fluttered before he opened his eyes fully, though quickly snapping into shock as he saw Xiao Xingchen's face.

"Don't move."

Xue Yang slapped away Xiao Xingchen's hand, looking like an injured animal fighting for survival.

Li Daiyu exclaimed, "Speak! There's no way Xiao Xingchen wouldn't remember Xue Yang's voice!"

"Yeah!" Luo Qingqing agreed. "He's totally done for!"

"You.." Xue Yang grumbled, his voice raspy and hoarse.

"Oh noooo!" The girls individually exclaimed.

Li Daiyu elaborated, "Xue Yang's throat is injured. After coughing up so much blood, his voice is all raspy; you can't recognise it at all!!"

Xiao Xingchen admonished, "I told you, don't movie, or else you'll pull on your injuries. Don't worry; since I saved you from the clutches of death, I won't hurt you."

Xue Yang's expression was that of confusion, before he suddenly realised. 'He doesn't recognise me...'

“Wait, we can hear his thoughts too?! Well, this will be interesting..”

Lan Jingyi commented, “I’ve always been curious as to what goes on in your head; this will be a good chance.”

“Little Lan, I’m afraid my mind is too complicated for little children like you. Maybe give it a lifetime or two before you wish to understand me.”

“Oh, really?” Lan Jingyi challenged, sending him a look. “I think I understand you *perfectly fine* already..”

Xue Yang cleared his throat before he said, “Who are you?”

A-Qing snapped, “You have eyes, use them! He’s a roaming cultivator, obviously! He went through all that effort of saving you, bringing you back and even giving you magical elixirs! What gives you the right to be so mean?!”

“Someone please explain to me how he was *mean* by asking that..?”

“Why is this girl so angry?” Chu Rong said. “She’s like a cat whose tail has been stepped on; totally spirited and feisty!”

“Yeah, she’s been very agitated ever since they rescued Xue Yang..”

“Maybe it’s because he’s stealing Xiao Xingchen’s attention? Perhaps she enjoyed it being just the two of them, without a third party to interrupt them. I kind of understand how she’s feeling.”

Xue Yang stared at her intensely, as if picking out all of her secrets and looking into her soul, until A-Qing finally flinched back in fear and sheepishly hid behind Xiao Xingchen. A cold sweat encompassed her body, fear the only sense that ran through her veins that she soon replaced with faux arrogance.

“It’s good that she’s so cautious,” Nie Mingjue commented. “With senses like that, she’d make a great cultivator.”

A-Qing slightly preened under the praise, trying to hide her smile behind a hand.

“You’re blind?” Xue Yang asked.

A-Qing retorted, “Are you looking down on me for being blind? It was a blind man that saved you, otherwise you’d be rotting on the roadside by now! You’re so rude, not even thanking Daozhang when you woke up! And calling me blind with such an insulting tone, hmph... So what if I’m blind?!”

The silence that befell the room was so quiet that you could even hear a pin drop.

“....When exactly did he insult you? Little beauty, when you’re scared of someone, you don’t provoke them...”

A-Qing, embarrassed, moved so she was hiding behind Xiao Xingchen, earnestly wishing that this show would just come to an end so she could save face!

Xiao Xingchen placed a hand on her head as he coaxed, “There, there, A-Qing, calm down. I’m sure he didn’t mean it...” He then turned to Xue Yang. “You should stop leaning against the wall now. I haven’t finished bandaging the wound on your leg yet. Come over here.”

Xue Yang only stared at him suspiciously in reply.

Xiao Xingchen finally reasoned, “If we don’t act quickly, your leg might be crippled for good.”

“Then,” A smile pulled at Xue Yang’s lips. “I’m in your care, Daozhang.”

‘This person...’ A-Qing unconsciously squeezed Xiao Xingchen’s sleeve tighter. ‘He’s terrifying..!’

Wen Qing shook her head disapprovingly, “He can change his face so quickly from cruel to amiable. This is the kind of man who is dangerous to encounter; a man who hides his true intentions behind a sweet smile. A-Ning, promise me you’ll never get involved with people like this.”

Wen Ning slightly smiled at his sister’s oh-so-familiar speech of worry, “Okay, Jie.”

Unnoticed to both Xiao Xingchen and A-Qing, Xue Yang quietly hid his left hand behind him—the hand that had only four fingers.

“Huh, so the story is true.” Lan Jingyi mumbled.

Xue Yang replied with a raised eyebrow, “What, did you not believe me?”

“I dunno,” The Junior replied. “I thought you cut it off yourself or something. The story was obviously true if you had to hide it from Xiao Xingchen, who would have recognised it.”

“You’re so unbelievable...”

From another part of the room, Luo Qingqing nodded in agreement. “His four fingers must be a distinguishable part of him that would give away his identity immediately. It’s a shame, though, that he’s going through all of this effort just to deceive poor Senior Xiao.”

“Is Daozhang not going to ask who I am?” Xue Yang sniffed, “And why I’m so badly injured?”

“Yeah, to be honest....” Yu Huizhong mumbled. “Why *is* he so injured? Just what happened to him to be on the brink of death..?”

“I wonder what happened as well..” Xue Yang’s eyes flashed a dangerous red flare as he glanced around the room, until they eventually gazed upon yellow robes, hidden deep into the crowd.

Sensing his gaze, Jin Guangyao tensed. He glanced at Su She, who was equally intimidated, and then silently shuffled his way deeper into the mass of people, hoping that Xue Yang wouldn’t notice.

Because what had truly happened to Xue Yang was indeed a betrayal on his part. He thought he had everything calculated, that Xue Yang died that day, just as he personally announced to the cultivation world. Instead, Xue Yang escaped, being pulled forward by fate and was saved by Xiao Xingchen, only further complicating matters. Jin Guangyao should have made sure he was dead long ago; he should have crippled the corpse for extra measure, making sure the delinquent could never wield a sword for the rest of his life.

And although this was one of Jin Guangyao’s endless list of regrets, nothing could be helped, for his attention was always needed elsewhere when he was chief cultivator. He had no time to deal with the wild Xue Yang, whom he had rescued and then pleaded guilty for after murdering Nie Mingjue..

Xiao Xingchen replied, “Why would I need to ask if you do not want to tell? We coincidentally passed by and lent a helping hand, nothing more, nothing less. To me, it’s nothing difficult. Once you are healed, we will go our separate ways again. A-Qing, since he’s injured, we’re giving him the bed. Unfortunately, I’m going to have to trouble you to sleep in the coffin. I laid it with hay, it shouldn’t be cold.”

A-Qing replied quietly, “There’s nothing troublesome about it. It’s good enough having a place to sleep. I won’t be cold, so you don’t need to give me your outer robes this time.”

“He’s such a caring man to give her his outer robes,” A woman commented. “An amazing spouse he would make.”

Xiao Xingchen affectionately patted her head in response. “Well then, off I go.”

As he exited through the door, A-Qing yelled after him, “Be safe!”

Xiao Xingchen fondly smiled at A-Qing's words. He considered her as family, and indeed regretted ever saving Xue Yang. Yet another part of him—a more aspirational, twisted part of him—was happy that he did what he did, for all that mattered was that he *saved a life*. He didn't save Xue Yang, no, but on that day, he saved a *dying man*.

“Hey,” Xue Yang said. “Blind kid, come here.”

A-Qing sniffed, “What?”

Xue Yang laid back on the bed as he replied, “I’ve got candy for you.”

“...Candy?”

“No! I’m not going!”

“Are you sure? Are you scared of me?” Xue Yang narrowed his eyes. “Do you really think that I can’t move and that I can’t go get you, even if you come?”

Many flinched at the threat he laid out for A-Qing, and they all suddenly remembered who he was. All of this time, to them he was just an idiot *delinquent* with a few screws loose—but now, they remembered that he was a *serial killer*, a *slaughterer*, a *lunatic*, and most of all, *Xiao Xingchen’s murderer*.

A-Qing swallowed her saliva before using the bamboo pole to guide her to Xue Yang. And suddenly, at a terrifying speed, a red piece of candy was thrown in her direction.

“Oh no!” Luo Qingyang unconsciously called, holding her hand out to the screen. Because that girl was so *young* and reminded her of her *sweet, sweet Mianmian*. “Watch out—”

A-Qing, however, remained absolutely expressionless as she allowed it to collide with her chest. She stumbled over her feet and almost fell over due to the impact. “Hey! What did you hit me with?!”

Multiple sighs of relief resounded within the room as people placed their hands to their rabid hearts.

“I thought he was out to kill her...”

“That scared me so much.”

“I swear I felt my heart jump out of my chest..!”

Xue Yang rolled his eyes, “For what reason would I kill her? Stupid people...”

Xue Yang snorted, “I forgot that you’re blind and can’t catch. It landed by your feet.”

“Is he mocking her?” Ouyang Zizhen muttered in distaste. “Although she isn’t *really* blind, that’s so rude.”

“Isn’t it just?”

“No,” Lan Sizhui replied, his demeanour as calm as ever. “He was probably testing whether A-Qing was *really* blind.”

“What? How?”

“Everything about this situation is unnatural, from the sudden kindness he was showing her, to the provoking words he said. He *deliberately* threw it to test if she could see to dodge.”

“Wow, that’s so smart!”

“Dude, you know you’re calling the enemy smart, right?”

“Oh yeah... I mean ‘That’s so dumb!!’”

“Dude... just stop...”

“Hmph!” A-Qing huffed, reaching down to grab the candy. “Don’t keep calling me blind this, blind that! I have a name—my name is A-Qing!”

“Is it good?” Xue Yang asked, ignoring her words deliberately.

“You’re a weird one, aren’t you? You’re covered in blood and so badly injured, and yet you’re carrying candy with you.”

Xue Yang smiled reminiscently. “I really liked candy when I was young, but I couldn’t get them no matter what, always watching other people eat them with envy. And so I’ve always thought that if I become wealthier one day, I’d carry an infinite amount of candy with me.”

“That’s...” Lan Jingyi trailed off, “....surprisingly innocent of him.”

“I never thought there’d be such a pure and childish side to the delinquent Xue Yang... now isn’t this a pleasant surprise?”

“So it seems he’s always had a sweet tooth, ever since he was a child. Just think of the promising man he would make had he not deviated from the right path..”

“I don’t think he *deviated*, necessarily, but was just introduced to the harshness of society at a too-young age.. How pitiful.”

“This candy is so tasty. I’ve never had it before!” A-Qing exclaimed. “Do you have any more?”

Xue Yang darkly grinned, “Of course I do. Come here, and I’ll give you more.”

“Oh dear...” Lan Jingyi mourned. “What are you planning this time, Xue Yang?”

“It’s a promise, then! You’ll give me candy if I go over!” A-Qing decided as she used her bamboo stick to search around for the bed.

“Of course.” Xue Yang replied, his hands clenched around a black item.

“That—” Ouyang Zizhen gaped. “That’s his sword, Jiangzai!”

“What is he going to do to her?!”

“Will he kill her?”

“No, he’s probably still testing her. Let’s just... hope for the best.”

Meanwhile, Xiao Xingchen was *emitting* fury. His entire demeanour was terrifying, to say the least, as he looked at the screen.

As A-Qing came closer, Xue Yang motioned the sword in her direction, only inches away from piercing her torso. A-Qing continued to walk expressionlessly, so Xue Yang quietly retreated the blade and sheathed it.

Many people exhaled the breath they hadn’t known they were holding as this scene came to a close.

“Phew, she passed...”

“I really thought he was gonna kill her...”

“Here,” Xue Yang said as he passed a piece of red candy to A-Qing. “Hey, A-Qing, where’s that Daozhang of yours gone in the middle of the night?”

A-Qing replied, “Hmm, I think he went hunting or something..”

“Hunting? You mean night-hunting?”

A-Qing said, “Really? Those two are pretty much the same. What’s the difference? It’s just helping other people fight ghosts and monsters without getting paid any money.”

“My word!” Jiang Fengmian exclaimed in awe. “This young lady is surely something! If only she had joined the Jiang Sect years ago..”

“Oh!!” Jin Ling realised with a start. “She must have said ‘night hunting’ wrong on purpose!”

Lan Jingyi, too, gasped. “I see! Xue Yang correcting her is equal to admitting that he’s a cultivator!”

“This young lady was so young, yet she was already so sharp..”

Xue Yang grumbled, “...How could I get deceived by a little girl? How humiliating...”

A-Qing shakily left the room and made her way to the straw-filled coffin. ‘*This person is a cultivator, too, and a very dangerous one! I have to tell Daozhang as soon as possible!*’

Xiao Xingchen smiled proudly at the display, his fondness for the girl reaching leaps and bounds.

Days later, A-Qing was following Xiao Xingchen around their abode fretfully as they conversed, “You already ate his candy, you should stop trying to chase him off. He’ll leave once his injuries are healed. No one is willing to stay with us in this coffin home.”

“I should have listened to your warnings back then, A-Qing...” Xiao Xingchen solemnly whispered. “I’m sorry... I suppose I felt like I had to defend him because he had been so considerate to you and I both..”

“It isn’t your fault,” A-Qing replied, flashing him a thin smile. “Xue Yang, he... He fooled everyone. Including Wei Wuxian. So don’t feel so bad about yourself, okay?”

“Aaaaaah!” Luo Qingqing felt like ripping her hair out at this point. “Tell him about the missing finger, quick, tell him!! Otherwise Xiao Xingchen won’t know he’s Xue Yang!”

Li Daiyu shook her head slowly, “She can’t, remember? If she tells him, then Xiao Xingchen will know that she can see. And the poor girl probably thinks that he will leave her if he found out she had been deceiving him..”

“That’s a valid point.. Though it’s such a shame..”

“But he—” A-Qing began, but was suddenly interrupted by a third party, “Are you talking about me?” Xue Yang said through a smirk, his arms crossed as he leaned

against the wall.

“Who—” A-Qing hesitated. “Who’s talking about you?! Narcissist!”

“That was... more natural than I expected. Usually, people would try to cover it up, vehemently insisting that they *weren’t*... This girl is smart, that’s for sure.”

“I never would have thought of it like that!”

Xue Yang asked, “Daozhang, are you planning on repairing the roof, bringing all those things back?”

“Yes,” Xiao Xingchen replied. “I plan on staying here for a while. The shoddy roof isn’t good for your recovery or for A-Qing.”

“You know how to, Daozhang?”

“I haven’t even tried before, to tell the truth.”

“I’ll help you then!”

From within the coffin home, A-Qing quietly sulked as she listened to them conversing like old friends. ‘I’ll beat this bastard to death!’

“+1!”

“+1!”

“+1!”

“+1!”

Chapter End Notes

Chapter Notes:

[1] Big brother is a very familiar term for people who just recently met. Daozhang is an honorific mainly used to address Daoist Priests, but is sometimes used for cultivators in general.

Just wondering, would you like me to continue following the manhua for empathy, or should I follow the animation or live action? They’re all pretty much the same, but I’d

like to get a few opinions out there :)

Next Chapter: Empathy part two!

Empathy II - The Present

Chapter Summary

Xue Yang and Xiao Xingchen go out on a night hunt, except nothing is what it seems.

Chapter Notes

Apologies for the small delay! I was sick and felt too queasy to update.

Also, there were many people who wanted me to follow different adaptations, so I decided to merge the three. I'm sure you're all dying to see Xiao Xingchen's death (lol pun) so I'll add the most angst parts from each one and work with what I have from there. :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

A month later, Xue Yang's injuries had more or less healed. His throat had recovered for a while now, but he kept a false voice and never brought up leaving their little group.

“How shameless!” Li Daiyu exclaimed. “If I was A-Qing, I would beat that little delinquent up and give him a taste of his own medicine!”

“Li-Guniang.. out of pure curiosity,” Nie Huaisang asked. “Just *how* would you beat him up if you were under the pretence of being blind?”

“I would go like this!” Li Daiyu determinedly struck a palm in the air. “And then this! And then kick him in the most painful regions!”

“Oh, haha... I see...” Nie Huaisang muttered, followed by a weak, “...scary..”

As she threw down her bamboo pole onto the bed of hay, A-Qing's grumbling figure soon followed and exclaimed under her breath, “You have already recovered, yet you still won’t leave. I will beat you up, you bad man!”

At her words, a cackle escaped Xue Yang’s throat. “Little blind, who knew that you held such demanding thoughts for me? Why did you even hate me in the first place?”

Lan Jingyi whispered, “Who *wouldn’t* hold such thoughts for you?”

“Sorry, I didn’t quite catch what you said. What was that?”

Lan Jingyi pursed his lips as he ignored the delinquent seated beside him.

From the other side of the room, Xue Yang asked, “Are you going on a night hunt again, Taoist? Take me with you.”

“I cannot,” Xiao Xingchen replied. “Every time you talk, I laugh. And if I laugh, I cannot hold my sword properly.”

Song Lan closed his eyes, taking a deep breath that he’d yearned to for a while. Although it pained him to see that Xingchen found closure from another during their separation, it *hurt* to think of the *depth* that Xue Yang manipulated him. He firstly gained Xingchen’s trust,

Xingchen's *laughter*; and then cruelly pushed him away, betraying him in the worst way possible.

He found his death being on the other end of Xingchen's sword suitable—Xingchen only *gave* and *gave* and *gave* to him, whereas he only *took*. He failed to protect his best friend, so it was only fair that the other ended his life.

Except, now, thanks to Xingchen's shizhi, he had a *second chance* to make things right. He *will* protect his soulmate now, and if offer his life he must, then he shall do so without hesitation.

Xue Yang pouted as he headed after the daoist, “I promise I won’t talk this time! I’ll carry your sword, be your helper. Come on, I promise I won’t be a bother. Let me go with you!”

“Alright then. However, though you’re also a cultivator, it’s best to be careful. Don’t run off.”

“Of course, I’ll stick to your side and definitely won’t run off!

“Why is he so insistent?” Wen Ruohan mumbled as he placed a hand to his chin. “These two are renowned for having a bad history together, so his intentions could only be something negative...”

Upon seeing how close the pair had gotten, A-Qing’s mood soured. ‘What is that bad man doing, following Daozhang? He’s definitely plotting something! I have to go and see

what's happening! Daozhang had mentioned that there was a village nearby that was being disturbed by walking corpses, so he wanted us to stay put.'

"I feel like her following them is a bad omen itself..."

"We've already clarified that Xue Yang wants to harm them. I'm only wondering why he wanted to go on a night hunt with Xiao Xingchen so much.."

"But it's incredibly impulsive to follow cultivators out when they are going to fight corpses. Especially if one is a mortal, for they could get injured. This girl may have the best intentions at heart, but what use is that when your impulsiveness gets you injured, or potentially *killed*."

"I don't think it's *that* serious, considering they haven't encountered any during the day in the city. Maybe these are just the leftovers from a massive swarm? Surely if there were too many to take care of, the entire town would have already been slaughtered?"

She followed the duo into the woods, where their supposed 'night hunt' was to occur. 'Ah! Daozhang! And that bad man!' Her heart was then caught in her throat, however, as she watched Xiao Xingchen piece his sword into the heart of an old villager!

A most deafening silence befell the room as the hearts of many sunk at the sight. Not a single person moved, not even Xiao Xingchen, who was staring at the screen with a scarily pale visage that continued to quiver by the second.

No one wanted to break this silence, for it would mean that the episode would continue, and the scene they just saw would replay within their minds. Cultivators trained to *protect* the mortals from the evil beings of the world, not to *kill them*. A few junior cultivators felt their

whole world shatter as someone who went down in legend, someone who they *admired* had just *killed someone*.

A question that lingered in the heads of many was ‘ *Why did Xiao Xingchen kill an innocent old man?! How could Xiao Xingchen kill an innocent old man?*’

Xiao Xingchen said, “There’s not even one living person in this village. They’re all walking corpses now.”

“That’s right,” Xue Yang replied. “Thankfully your sword can aim your attacks towards corpse energy, otherwise with just the two of us, we’d have trouble getting out of this encirclement..”

“Let’s go check out the village again. If there’s really no living person, we should burn these walking corpses as soon as possible.”

“...Walking corpses?” Jiang Wanyin muttered. “That was no *walking corpse* , that was a *living, breathing, human!*”

“Xiao Xingchen can’t see, right?” Jin Ling continued. “Then... perhaps he was mistaken? Perhaps it was just an accident!”

“No, I think not...” Jin Zixuan swallowed as he noted, “And even if he was mistaken, Xue Yang clearly called that villager a ‘walking corpse’...”

“But that wasn’t a walking corpse!” Lan Jingyi exclaimed. “I know one when I see one, and that is most *definitely* not one!”

“Who is to say that it wasn’t planned?” Wen Ruohan theorised.

“What?”

“I, myself, know how *brutal* Xue Yang can be... this could have all been planned by him.”

“But didn’t he say that Xiao Xingchen’s sword senses corpse energy? If so, that man really *must* have been a walking corpse...”

“This is so confusing..”

As the duo left the area, A-Qing rushed to the corpses sprawled out on the floor. “These people are really walking corpses? The bad guy is really helping Daozhang?”

She gently placed a hand to their neck when she noticed something strange. “Why have all the tongues of all these walking corpses been cut off?”

“Their tongues?!” Ouyang Zizhen exclaimed, his eyes wide. “Theres... there’s no way!”

“They’re not walking corpses. They’re only humans under corpse poisoning!” Jin Ling finished. “And just like we had, they’ve only just gotten poisoned and are still alive. If they’re treated properly, they can be brought back!”

Lan Jingyi whispered, “But... Killing them would be the same as killing a living person!”

Li Daiyu surmised, “They’d be able to talk and tell him who they were. But the unfortunate thing is, they all had their tongues cut off beforehand, so they could only let out cries that sounded extremely similar to the howls of walking corpses!”

“No wonder it was so confusing!”

“So *that’s* where everyone in Yi City went!”

“Then... who could have done this?!”

“Who else?” Li Daiyu muttered darkly. “It could have only been *Xue Yang!*”

When multiple eyes landed on him, Xue Yang sweetly smiled in response.

“Shidi, don’t attack him! That’s reckless!”

“Why, shixiong?! He killed an innocent person!”

“Don’t forget that our golden cores are sealed! And him.. He probably knows how to fight *without* cultivation more than any of us!”

Xue Yang snickered, “Me? I killed him? Don’t forget that the one who killed that man was actually Xiao Xingchen. I was just... let’s say, acting as a guidance mentor!”

“You-”

“Xue Yang, you scum!”

“You deserve worse than death!”

'I don't know what the problem is, but the bastard can't possibly be a good guy. From now on, every time they go out night-hunting again, I'll have to follow them!'

Yu Huizhong exclaimed, “He’s rotten to the core! A-Qing please don’t trust Xue Yang just like that!”

“She is clever and bold. Unfortunately, her wits are no match for a crafty and experienced bandit such as Xue Yang.”

On a certain winter’s night, A-Qing was still contemplating the events that had happened a few days prior. To remove her from her daze, Xue Yang threw a wrapped piece of candy at her forehead. “Little blind brat, what are you mumbling about over there?”

A-Qing retorted, “I told you not to call me -little blind brat-! And what was that?”

“A candy,” Xue Yang replied with a carefree smile. “For you. It’s by your foot.”

Ouyang Zizhen mumbled under his breath, “That rotten guy. He’s smiling but his eyes aren’t smiling at all. He’s so scary..”

A-Qing threw the candy into her mouth as she replied, “You are a strange guy. Eating candy everyday even though you are not a kid..”

Xue Yang grinned, “A-Qing, do you want to hear a story?”

Xiao Xingchen glanced in his direction in interest.

“A story?”

“Once upon a time, there was a young kid.”

“Why do I feel like I’ve heard this before...?”

“Right, it sounds so familiar!”

“Has Xue Yang told a story before?”

“Not that I remember... Xiao Xingchen only just found him, after all..”

“The kid really liked sweet things, but he often couldn't get any because he had neither parents nor money.”

“No wonder it's so familiar!” Lan Jingyi exclaimed. “This is the story you told everyone! You're telling it to A-Qing and Xiao-Daozhang too? How unoriginal...”

Xue Yang simply rolled his eyes.

“One day, he was sitting on some stairs, spacing out as usual. A man approached him and asked him to deliver a letter. He promised him a bag of candies in return. The kid was delighted, so he agreed immediately.”

“That's terribly suspicious! The man is obviously lying!”

“But to a young child who had encountered no kindness before, this man's offer was like he was being given the whole world!”

“He couldn’t read, and so he took the paper and went to the specified location. Unfortunately, the recipient happened to be that man’s enemy. His enemy could not find that man, so he beat the little kid up.”

“That’s awful...” Luo Qingqing mumbled.

“How could they do such a thing to a young child like him?! That’s just inhumane!”

“The kid was beaten up badly, but that was all right to him, as long as he got his candy. He struggled to his feet and searched for that man. Guess what happened next. What a coincidence, he bumped into the man that told him to deliver the letter..”

“It’s you right?” A-Qing exclaimed. “Someone who has such a sweet tooth has to be you!”

There were a few chuckles within the room at her comment.

Xiao Xingchen asked, “And what happened after that?”

Xue Yang replied, “And he asked for his candy. But instead, the man struck him with a whip, and he fell to the ground.”

“How cruel! Surely this man has no conscience of his own!”

“I never would have guessed that people could be that cruel...”

Jin Guangyao mumbled, “You have no idea..”

Su Minshan glanced at him sadly, and despite the urge to comfort his clan leader, he refrained from doing so out of propriety.

A-Qing grumbled, “What sort of story is that? It sucks! It makes me so mad! Why were you like that when you were a little kid? If it were me, I would– I would spit in his food and tea, and punch him like this and this and this...!!!”

“Alright, alright,” Xiao Xingchen said. “The story is finished. It is late. Let us get some rest.”

Li Daiyu nodded in resolute agreement, “What a bad story. I only like stories with happy endings. I would beat him up too, A-Qing, that I would. You get the arms; I’ll get the legs!”

“Although it’s just Xue Yang’s sob story,” Ouyang Zizhen mumbled. “It was really sad..

Who knew that delinquent had such a backstory to him? Now I feel really bad...”

“Don’t feel bad!” Chu Rong exclaimed. “You are all too soft! Don’t forget how he tricked Xiao Xingchen into killing innocents! *And* controlled Song Lan, tried to control Wen Ning, and also attempted murder!! To Wei Wuxian and you poor juniors, of all people!!”

Although her words made most of them feel a bit better, the memory of that young, innocent child being whipped was forever being replayed within their minds.

“I know that Xue Yang’s deeds aren’t justifiable, but... at least he had a reason, right?”

“What reason? Just because he was mistreated as a kid doesn’t give him the right to kill people! It’s his own fault for becoming such a twisted man!”

The silent war between the two sides was growing increasingly tense by the second.

In the middle of the night, Xiao Xingchen’s voice awoke A-Qing from her slumber, “No matter what happened after that, since the current you is, mostly, safe and sound you shouldn’t let yourself get caught up in your past.”

Xue Yang replied, “I’m not caught up in my past. It’s just that little blind kid keeps stealing my sweets and finished them all, so I’m reminded of back then when I didn’t have any to eat..”

To A-Qing, that night within Yi City was the coldest yet.

“Liar... Xue Yang is clearly caught up in his past! After all, why would he tell us that story *twice* ?!”

“Maybe, if Xue Yang had a different past where he was raised in a loving household, he wouldn’t have become such a twisted man.”

“Aiyoh, I can only rejoice that Wei Wuxian was found by Sect Leader Jiang Fengmian before he became like *this*. He grew up to be such a wonderful and bright teenager; I can only mourn as to what happened.”

“But he became evil in the end, didn’t he?” Another added. “All street rats will forever be street rats. Xue Yang, Wei Wuxian and that dog Jin Guangyao are mere examples! See how they all ended up today: Demonic cultivators, defectors and murderers. This is merely fate at play.”

When she next awoke, it was to the feeling of Xiao Xingchen’s hand on her bed of hay. ‘*Daozhang* is back from night-hunting? What’s he doing? He put something down... Is he going to visit that bad man now?’

“Bad man..” Lan Jingyi snickered. “A suitable nickname. Perhaps I’ll be using that from now on.”

Xue Yang raised an eyebrow, “You really think so? But the name is so... *bland*. ”

“At least it’s better than ‘little blind brat’.”

Xue Yang could voice no reply in response.

As Xiao Xingchen neared closer to the sleeping Xue Yang, the delinquent immediately was on guard and clenched his sword. What he didn’t expect, however, was for Xiao Xingchen to place a piece of candy on his bedside.

“....What’s this?”

When Xiao Xingchen finally left the room, A-Qing rolled over to see an unwrapped yellow candy beside her headspace. ‘Candy? So Daozhang came to give us candy, huh.’

After that day, Xiao Xingchen would give them each a piece of candy each day. Perhaps it was because of the candy, but they managed to gain a long period of relatively peaceful days.

“Candy?” Jiang Yanli muttered. “That’s so sweet of him...”

“Loved the pun, honey.” Jin Zixuan pursed his lips at the silence that followed. “Ahem—Anyways, what I meant to say was that I agree with you one hundred percent and that I *too* think that it was very nice of him to give them candy after hearing that story.”

Jiang Yanli simply giggled in response. “Oh, I love you, A-Xuan.”

As they stood before of a vegetable stall, A-Qing yelled, “Are you trying to take advantage of Daozhang being blind and unable to pick out vegetables by himself?”

The vendor defended, “What the hell are you going on about? All my vegetables are fresh, alright! You can’t even see, so stop your bullsh`t!”

“Uh... That cabbage has clearly gone bad, sir.. Are you perhaps the one who is blind?”

“How shameless! To think that he’s manipulating the blind for his own personal gain!”

“This is no different to theft!”

‘Damnit, damnit!! These vegetables clearly aren’t fresh and he didn’t even give us the amount we asked for, but I can’t say that I can see it!’

“Now you know the downside to having to pretend to be blind, hm?”

Xue Yang noticed the commotion and asked, “What’s going on? Are we buying groceries? These? Is this what we’re having tonight?”

“Yeah!” A-Qing quickly grabbed onto Xue Yang’s sleeve and exclaimed. “Hurry and help us take a look if these are fresh or not? Is he giving us an appropriate price?”

Xue Yang glowered, “Who cares what price he gives? Just cut it down to half.” At his intimidating figure, the vendor cowered in fear and immediately gave them the correct amount.

“I guess having Xue Yang around *does* reap some benefits, even if he’s manipulating them himself..”

“Just how many blind people have been fooled like this? It’s just sickening..”

At Xue Yang’s assistance, A-Qing happily skipped ahead, far into the street. ‘*Maybe the rotten guy isn’t too bad? But I can’t let my guard down around him...*

“This girl is quite responsible,” Wen Ruohan commented. “Many would reveal themselves too quickly or would cower in the presence of such a man, but she’s still on guard against him and is listening to her instincts. Very smart, indeed.”

Xue Yang mumbled, “Should I take that as a compliment?”

“Young miss, the sun is setting. If you really can’t see, you shouldn’t walk so fast.”

Xiao Xingchen’s heart caught in his throat.

His eyes widened at the voice, for he knew who exactly that was and what would soon befall him in the near future.

Looking like a deer caught in headlights, A-Qing turned around, meeting the eyes of Song Lan. “Don’t play around too much. This place is strong in dark energy, it’s best not to loiter outside after dark.”

“Eh? Song Lan?”

“Could it be that he is here to save Xiao Xingchen from Xue Yang?!?” Another exclaimed happily. “Finally! Surely Song Lan would recognise that delinquent from one glance!”

Finding him similar to Xiao Xingchen, A-Qing stifled a laugh. “A-Qing thanks Daozhang!”

“As expected of Senior Xiao Xingchen’s friend,” Lan Xichen commented, “As best friends, it’s natural that their demeanour would be so similar. It would have been nice to have befriended them while they were still alive.”

Jiang Wanyin shrugged and replied, “Can’t you befriend them now? I mean, they’re alive and all..”

“Clan Leader Jiang...” Lan Xichen muttered sadly. “I’m afraid that we have no way of knowing whether this entire... *thing* is even real or not. The people who have been resurrected could die once again after it’s over... I’d rather not make friendships that I cannot keep, just to be safe.”

Jiang Wanyin glanced away awkwardly. He knew the sect leader’s history with friendships and betrayal, hell he even had a front seat view of the entire revelation of betrayal!

“I understand... But I still stand with what I said. You can’t hide yourself away forever.”

“I know...” Lan Xichen mumbled. “I know...”

“Excuse me,” Song Lan asked an old woman passing by, “I would like to ask if you’ve seen a blind cultivator with a sword around here?”

A-Qing gasped as she heard the conversation. ‘A blind cultivator with a sword?’

The old woman replied, “I’m not sure. Perhaps you could try asking over there, Daozhang?”

“Thank you.”

“So he’s looking for Xiao Xingchen? Although, I do wonder why they weren’t together in the first place… I mean, they were always said to be inseparable, right?”

“Maybe something happened..”

“I can only say that this isn’t going to end well. You saw for yourself how Song Lan was now a fierce corpse for Xue Yang. And… Xiao Xingchen’s soul was in shambles… truly appalling..”

“Wei Wuxian said that he didn’t want to live anymore.. What could this mean?”

“I think that Xue Yang killed them both in cold blood! Too distraught to live without his best friend beside him, Xiao Xingchen refuses to come back to life!”

“…Sorry, but how can you *refuse* to come back to life?”

“Maybe it’s a subconscious decision? Something to do with the will of the soul or something..”

A-Qing approached the cultivator clad in black, “Daozhang, why are you looking for him?”

Song Lan exclaimed, “You’ve seen him?”

“Are you a friend of Daozhang?”

After a pause, Song Lan replied, “....Yes.”

“That’s strange...” Ouyang Zizhen mumbled. “Why did he hesitate? Aren’t they best friends?”

Lan Sizhui replied, “Perhaps it has something to do with why they aren’t together? An argument between friends?”

Jin Ling raised an eyebrow, “Wow, Sizhui, that’s a surprise. You actually know what the word ‘argument’ means... You’re so calm and civil I never would have expected it.”

Jin Zixuan lightly tapped his son on the head. “When did my son get so sarcastic, huh? Where exactly did that trait come from, because it definitely wasn’t me. Which of your uncles?”

A-Qing approached him further, “Do you really know him? How tall is that Daozhang? Is he handsome or ugly? What is his sword like?”

“He’s about as tall as I am, he has a comely countenance and his sword is engraved with patterns of frost.”

‘He answered perfectly and he doesn’t seem like a bad person. It should be fine.’

“Looks like she’s a good judge of character...”

A middle-aged woman sighed, “Now, if only she were there when I met my husband, aiyoh..”

“Why are all of you married women so *savage*? ” Ouyang Zizhen cried. “You all complain about your husbands left and right, for the love of Guanyin!!”

“I know where he is. Come with me, Daozhang!”

“...Thank... Thank you..”

Lan Jingyi snuck a glance to Xue Yang, who was watching the scene with mild interest.

“*It's about to go down..* ”

Chapter End Notes

For some reason, empathy feels so much quicker when you write it instead of watching the show.. I swear that in the live action it felt as if empathy lasted for like 5 hours.

Also, just me who found the empathy part of the animation a bit rushed? It’s a good amount of time, and follows through with everything, but it felt so short..

Next Chapter: Song Lan and Xue Yang meet!

Empathy III - The Present

Chapter Summary

Song Lan and Xue Yang's confrontation!

Chapter Notes

我的天哪!! 300,000 hits! I am absolutely stunned, and I cannot thank you all enough for the incredible milestone we've just surpassed. I haven't updated much because I am still a student, so I obviously have my studies & school to account for, but I will try my best to post new chapters as much as I can! Happy Bonfire night everyone! 你特别好! 我喜欢你!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Soon, the pair finally arrived at the Coffin House, which was as silent as the wind. Just as they reached the door, however, Song Lan hesitated.

“He’s in there,” said A-Qing, looking up at Song Lan. “What’s wrong? Are you not going inside?”

Wei Wuxian, too, was perplexed. ‘Is it because they haven’t seen each other in so long?’

“How curious,” chuckled Xue Yang, not sounding at all affronted. “Song-Daozhang, I never knew you had such patience! I wasn’t aware you knew I was there before I saw you in the town. Good thing I chose to leave in the end, haha!”

“Is this really a laughing situation?” said Lan Jingyi, staring at Xue Yang in unconcealed disgust. “Hey, where’s your conscience? I don’t expect you to have one, of course, but one would think that after all of the suffering you’ve put them through, you’d at *least* feel a *bit* of remorse!”

“Well said, Jingyi,” said Ouyang Zizhen. “I was just wondering what kind of psycho would pat themselves on the back even *after* witnessing the aftermath of the destruction he’s caused. And then I happened to remember that he was Xue Yang, and I thought, *he’s the kind of psycho to do that, isn’t he?* Honestly, I’ve met *demons* with more humanity than him.”

Song Lan held the silence in the following few moments — to which A-Qing nervously grasped at her cane — but as he intensely stared at the doors separating them from the building, there was a trace of acceptance in his eyes.

“No,” he said softly. “...Let’s go.”

“If I was quicker,” said Song Lan slowly. “If I hadn’t hesitated... Then maybe... Maybe I could have prevented your death, Xingchen.”

Xiao Xingchen looked at him, and knew without a doubt that the best response would be silence — something Song Lan cherished in moments like these. And perhaps a brief brush of their hands, to remind him that they were in it together.

In a matter of seconds, however, a figure sped past him and rushed into the Coffin House. Song Lan double-took in surprise, before his eyes hardened in hatred. ‘ That person! ’

“Hmph, how annoying,” said A-Qing, making a sound of displeasure. “He’s back.”

“Who is he? Why is he here?”

“He’s a rotten guy. He refuses to tell us his name. Who knows who he is?” said A-Qing. “Daozhang saved him, but he keeps clinging to Daozhang, it’s so annoying!”

“Annoying?” Xue Yang looked positively *offended*. “Hey! Do you really think *you* are qualified to say that, huh, Little Liar? If anything, *you* were more annoying, especially when Xiao-Daozhang was around! *Oh, Daozhang this, Daozhang that!* You might as well say he’s your parent! But what parent would actually tolerate such an annoying child?!?”

For some reason, the statement felt very personal and Lan Jingyi felt a rush of coldness in his heart. He pressed a hand to his chest and slowly rubbed the area, like he had seen Wei Wuxian do when Lan Wangji said something very cheesy to him.

Song Lan’s face tightened as he watched Xue Yang through the open doors, laughing and happily rattling on to Xiao Xingchen as though they were old friends. “Who’s turn is it to buy groceries today?” he glanced down at his hand curiously. “Hey, I have two sticks here. Whoever picks the long one doesn’t have to go and whoever picks the short one goes. How about it?”

Xiao Xingchen tentatively plucked one of the sticks from his grasp. “Yours is shorter, I win, so you go!” said Xue Yang excitedly.

“It’s so disgusting, seeing Xue Yang treat Xiao-Daozhang like that. He’s really shameless!”

“I’m just eagerly waiting for the moment Wei Wuxian beats him until *he*’s blind!”

“Alright,” murmured Xiao Xingchen softly, not sounding at all as though he was even slightly displeased. “I’ll go.”

“Great!” said Li Daiyu quickly. “Hurry and come out! Then as soon as he comes out, Song Lan can grab him and run!”

But all of a sudden, Xue Yang grasped his white sleeve. “Come back, I’ll go.”

Xiao Xingchen chuckled. “How come you want to go now?”

Xue Yang looked at him before bursting into uncontrollable laughter, and his eyes teared up in amusement. “Are you an idiot? I was playing a trick on you! The stick I got was shorter, but I kept another longer stick on me. No matter which one you picked, I could always get a longer one. I’m just using your blindness to prank you!”

“That really wasn’t appropriate,” said A-Qing disgruntledly. “Making fun of blind people really isn’t funny!”

‘*Yes, young lady, I’m sure you found that comment to be very personal,*’ the crowd thought, laughing at the irony.

When Xue Yang eventually headed out, Song Lan and A-Qing were made to discreetly hide behind a wall. “This man...” murmured Song Lan, “When did the Daozhang save him?”

A-Qing tilted her head thoughtfully. “Hm... it’s been quite a few years.”

“And the Daozhang never found out who he is?”

“No,” said A-Qing quickly.

“It’s a bit silly, you know. How can you live with someone for many years and *not* know their name? What if you’re telling them they’re a disappointment when they’re not face to face? Or telling a friend, ‘*That child is such a disappointment*’. Aiyoh, won’t that sweet girl misunderstand, thinking he’s speaking about her?”

‘*Hey, who at home are you calling a disappointment, woman?*’ Was a thought widely shared.

“While he’s been staying with the Daozhang, what has he done?” asked Song Lan coolly.

A-Qing looked immensely pleased, as though she had never thought that someone would ask her such a flattering question. “Joking around, trying to get me kicked out, following Daozhang around like an annoying rotten bug, being mean to me all the time, speaking with bad language, bullying me, scaring me, and... Oh! He also goes out night-hunting with Daozhang!”

Song Lan double took. “Night-hunting?! Night-hunting what? Do you know?”

“Sometime ago they often Night-hunted walking corpses,” A-Qing explained. She looked slightly disgruntled at the lack of attention to her woes she spoke of. “Now it’s all ghosts, beasts, and all that.”

Song Lan’s brows furrowed. ‘*Something feels strange, but there’s no proof.*’

“Almost there, Song-Daozhang!” said a young female cultivator from within the crowd. “You just need to punish Xue Yang and then save Xiao-Daozhang!”

“Is the Daozhang on good terms with him?” he asked.

A-Qing pouted. “I feel like Daozhang wasn’t too happy all alone... He finally found someone who did the same thing as him... So, I think he rather enjoys listening to that rotten guy spouting out nonsense...”

‘*I cannot let Xiao Xingchen know of this, no matter what!*’

“Don’t tell Daozhang anything about this!” Song Lan said, before swiftly turning around and rushing away, in the same direction Xue Yang had just left.

“They were truly best friends, through and through...” said Nie Huaisang dreamily. “To be honest, I would have just told him and quietly left without Xue Yang knowing... You know, it makes me wonder... I’ve heard of the term ‘soulmates’; people willing to go through any hardship for one another... Maybe this is what it’s like?”

“Daozhang, are you going to beat up that rotten guy?” A-Qing called after him, looking far too pleased at the idea.

“Beat up?” said Jiang Wanyin. “He’s going to tear that fiend Xue Yang apart!”

A-Qing was silent for a few moments before her face lit up, as though someone had just promised her the world. “No, I have to go and see too!”

“I really love this child,” said an older woman. “So filled with youth. That’s rarely seen these days.”

“Evidently,” said Ouyang Zizhen, staring pointedly at the wheezing Lan Qiren, before, of course, his father once again intervened with a swift slap of the head.

The screen swiftly switched to Xue Yang who was leisurely walking through the empty streets, holding a basket of vegetables in one hand and yawning deeply into the other. His pace was a saunter, although it soon came to a stop when a cold, loathing voice called out to him.

“**Xue Yang.**”

It was no question to the audience who this person was.

A hidden understanding befell them, then, at the site of red hatred inside Song Lan’s eyes, seething with desired carnage — the gait in which he walked, the steady grip on his sword, and even the murderous intent in his thin, pursed lips was clearly accounted for. Not a single person voiced a comment, as though the respectful silence holding the room up by a thread could not be broken, not even by the soft laughter of Xue Yang.

“Oh?” said Xue Yang, scoffing. “Isn’t this Daozhang Song? What a rare guest. You here for a free meal?”

Not even bothering to respond, Song Lan leapt forward, thrusting his sword in the cold, frigid air in hopes of injuring Xue Yang. Despite his efforts, Xue Yang remained unscathed, for he had blocked the blow quickly, as though familiar with the attacks of the furious man.

“You insolent cultivator,” he hissed, placing down the basket as he leapt into the fight. “For once, I was in the mood to buy food, and you had to be a killjoy!”

“Why’d he put the basket down?” said Jin Ling. “Isn’t he in the middle of a fight?”

“He needs to keep up the facade in front of Xiao-Daozhang, remember,” said Lan Xichen, stroking his chin thoughtfully. “I suppose... he plans to quickly win this fight as though nothing happened...” moments later, he went silent and contemplative. Wei Wuxian felt a rush of sympathy.

“Tell me!” Song Lan roared. “Why would a piece of scum like you be so kind as to help him night-hunt?!”

The question evidently caught Xue Yang off guard, for in the moment of surprise, he avoided the attack too late and it grazed the side of his cheek, smearing it in thick red

blood.

“I can’t believe you know me so well, Song-Daozhang,” he chuckled.

“TELL ME!” Song Lan roared.

The fierceness and desperation in his shout touched the hearts of many in the crowd, including Xiao Xingchen, whose eyes were peeled open, entranced by the sight on the screen. His hands were gripping his pale sleeves so tightly, it looked as though they would tear from the sheer force.

“You really wanna hear it? You might go mad,” said Xue Yang playfully. “There are some things you’d be better off not knowing.”

Song Lan’s eyes hardened as he jumped forward to attack once more. “Xue Yang, I have limited patience toward you!”

After blocking yet another strike, Xue Yang smirked. “Fine. You’re the one who asked to hear this. Do you know what that dear cultivator friend of yours did?” the crazed look in his eyes intensified, and it could only be deciphered by the audience as mad amusement. “He killed many walking corpses, conducting exorcism without even asking for compensation. How moving.”

Ignoring Song Lan’s rapidly paling face, he carelessly continued, “He dug out his eyes for you and became blind, but luckily Shuanghua could point him towards the direction of corpse energy.”

“Oh my word,” Jiang Yanli gasped, tears coming to her eyes. “Those poor, poor boys...”

“However, even though Shuanghua can tell where corpse energy is, it can’t tell apart living and dead corpses,” Xue Yang continued wickedly. “I just had to make those people get corpse poisoning and cut off their tongues... For Shuanghua to direct him towards eradicating those ‘Walking Corpses’.”

A-Qing, who had hidden herself behind a wall, felt her knees go weak and she slowly fell to the floor. ‘What...?’

Nie Mingjue was outraged. He leapt to his feet in a burst of anger, and he looked so furious you could see the bulging veins in his head. “SCUM!” he roared. “How dare that criminal do such a despicable thing?! Where is he? Where is Xue Yang?!?”

“Poor Xiao-Daozhang,” said Nie Huaisang, slowly wiping dramatically-induced tears. “If only I had known, I would have tried to help with the situation.”

"The moment you saw Xue Yang, you would have run away," said Li Daiyu as matter-of-factly. Nie Huaisang did not respond.

"You animal..." Song Lan murmured. "You lowliest scum!"

"Song-Daozhang, sometimes I feel that you educated folks really have it tough when cursing others," said Xue Yang, cackling. "Over and over, it's just those few words. There's absolutely no novelty, no damage done."

Many eyes shifted to Lan Wangji, who was none the wiser.

"I stopped using those terms since I was seven," as Xue Yang spoke, A-Qing seemed to fall deeper into the depths of disparity — for she had learned half of her colourful language from Xue Yang, and had even thought the same things as him.

"You imposed upon his blindness and fooled him!" Song Lan roared, striking once more. Xue Yang side stepped out of the way, but once again, Song Lan's words had made him falter and he was once again injured. Yet Song Lan remained unscathed.

"His blindness?" he said, smiling once more at the other's pale face. "Daozhang, please don't forget... Who he gave his eyes to for him to become blind in the first place."

Although his sword had pierced Xue Yang in the chest, Song Lan looked as though *he* was the one being torn apart. Xue Yang cackled and took a slow, tentative step forward. "After I wiped out Baixue Temple, what did you say to Xiao Xingchen? 'From now on, we won't need to meet again.' He listened to you and he disappeared after he dug out his eyes for you."

Lan Xichen sighed deeply into his hands. All he could think of as Xue Yang spoke was the unfortunate parallels with his brother. Wangji, who suffered for Wei Wuxian; Wangji, who was pushed away by the very same man; and Wangji, who, even after Wei Wuxian told him to get lost, still went against his elders and tried to save him, getting himself deeply hurt as a result.

"So why are you here now? Aren't you making things a bit too difficult for him?"

Song Lan just narrowly avoided yet another strike, when Xue Yang suddenly smiled. "Isn't that right, Daozhang Xiao Xingchen?"

Song Lan's eyes widened and he turned around, but in that moment of disconnect, Xue Yang leapt forward and struck.

“How come Song Lan is falling for such a cheap trick?” murmured Luo Qingqing. “I suppose his mind and movements are really disrupted by Xue Yang’s words, huh?

Xue Yang rummaged inside his robes, grabbed a handful of ominous purple powder before throwing it squarely in Song Lan’s face.

“Isn’t that corpse poisoning powder?” said Lan Jingyi, startled. “He could have just killed him there and then... Don’t tell me he plans to make Song Lan appear like a walking corpse... And get Xiao Xingchen to kill him?!”

“What a despicable man!”

“If someone had previously told me the Yiling Patriarch had done this, I wouldn’t have questioned it. Now, there is someone just as bad as the *image* painted over Wei Wuxian!”

“Who knew such a demon existed?”

“He deserves to die!”

Instantly, Song Lan went pale in the face and stark purple veins bled through his neck, besmirching the pale skin it rested aside. He broke into a violent explosion of coughs, and it sounded so horrendous it was almost as though his throat was being torn from the inside out. A-Qing had just managed to find her footing, and watched, horror-struck as Xue Yang proceeded to cut out Song Lan’s tongue.

‘So this was when Song Lan’s tongue was cut off,’ Wei Wuxian thought dispiritedly.

Song Lan fell to his knees and the sight of him was incredibly pitiful; A-Qing could only cover her eyes, sobbing, while pretending that everything was a nightmare she would soon wake up from.

“That poor girl,” said Jiang Yanli, glancing around as though to see if A-Qing was in the room. Her motherly-instincts kicked in and she wanted to hold this child tight, and coddle her as though she were her own.

In a fit of fury, Song Lan clenched his sword tightly and dashed forward, aiming to strike Xue Yang’s heart. But the delinquent only grinned, and he skipped to the side, revealing the tall white-robed figure standing behind him.

“That’s... Xiao Xingchen?”

“Why is he there?”

“Don’t tell me Xue Yang anticipated this, and deliberately made Song Lan look like a fierce corpse before he got there?”

Song Lan dropped his sword, his eyes glassy in shock, when all of a sudden Xiao Xingchen raised his hand and pierced Song Lan’s chest with his sword. The shine in Song Lan’s eyes seemed to diminish then, and he looked up at Xiao Xingchen with betrayal.

Xiao Xingchen felt his guts churn in disgust and he was unable to process the sight on the screen. Noticing his shift in demeanour, Song Lan held up his palm in front of Xiao Xingchen’s eyes, shielding him from both the scene and the world around them.

“Are you there?” said Xiao Xingchen, ignorant to the weak trembling of the man who was impaled by his sword.

“I am,” said Xue Yang cheerfully. “Why are you here?”

“How can someone act so *cheerful* after doing what they just did?” said Li Daiyu, and her delicate almond-shaped eyes were glassy. “And to think not only did he condemn Song Lan to such a fate, but he also *deliberately* made Xiao Xingchen do it himself, just to be more cruel. That is just so heartbreaking.”

Xiao Xingchen wrenched his sword out of Song Lan’s chest and let him fall to the floor like a puppet whose strings had been cut. “Shuanghua behaved strangely. I followed its guidance and came to see.”

Song Lan weakly clutched his bleeding chest and fell to his knees as he continued, “We haven’t seen any walking corpses in this area for quite a while, not to mention one that roamed alone. Did it come here from elsewhere?”

“I guess,” said Xue Yang nonchalantly. “It’s making awful noises.”

If Song Lan passed his sword to Xiao Xingchen’s hand, Xiao Xingchen would immediately know who he is.

“Let’s go. It’s time to cook,” said Xue Yang. “I’m hungry already.”

“Have you bought the vegetables?” asked Xiao Xingchen.

But he didn’t do so.

“Yep. What a bad day to have run into this thing on my way back.”

Xue Yang was only so bold because he knew this.

Xue Yang stood before Song Lan, holding the basket of vegetables as he leant forward to whisper into his ear, “No food for you.”

“What a mean person! How could he be so cruel to a dying man?”

“I just hope Xiao Xingchen realises what Xue Yang has been doing soon...”

“But Song Lan clearly didn’t want him to,” said Li Daiyu to Nie Huaisang more than anyone.
“Why is that?”

“It’s most likely because of how Xiao Xingchen would react,” said Nie Huaisang softly.
“What would you think, if you had just parted ways with your best friend after saying something so negative to him? And then you kill him unknowingly, while you are still on bad terms. I’m sure Song Lan knew it would drive Xiao Xingchen mad, so he deliberately kept quiet.”

“Let’s go!” said Xue Yang, and he and Xiao Xingchen left the streets, the latter unaware of the events that had just transpired. Song Lan watched them leave, weakly shaking like a delicate leaf in the wind, silently crying before his limbs lost all strength and he passed away lonely, surrounded by silence.

Song Lan held Xiao Xingchen’s hand like a lifeline, and though the cruel words had cut deeply, both now and at the time, he didn’t give Xue Yang the satisfaction of showing how affected he truly was.

Others in the crowd, however, did not share the same views. They were all actively looking around for Xue Yang, and they certainly were not happy when they realised he was in the same room as them.

“Hey! Who allowed this delinquent to resurrect! He deserves to die!”

“Let me do the honours,” said a particularly bold disciple of the Nie sect, before he realised they were unable to unsheathe their sword nor activate their golden core.

“Who cares if we can’t use our swords?! We’ll just have to fight like barbarians then!”

Xue Yang, contrary to the anxiety in Lan Jingyi’s chest, started to laugh extremely loudly. It was as though a switch had been flipped, and everyone went silent at once the moment he opened his mouth. He looked truly insane, then, with his wild, matted hair, and malicious, cruel grin accompanied by maniacal laughter.

“Bring it on,” he said in a crazed, high-pitched voice. “You think I deserve to die? Then, young disciple, take your sword,” he manoeuvred an arm out of the binding robes and reached out for the boy’s sword, shoving it into his chest. “Kill me. Why don’t we see how long it takes?”

The boy started to violently tremble, and he slowly stepped back, hand withdrawing his sword. Xue Yang, however, persisted and his grasp on the sword was so strong that the young disciple was forced to let go.

“What’s wrong?” he said, still laughing loudly. “Never killed someone before?”

“Hey! Xue Yang, that’s enough!” Lan Jingyi exclaimed, stepping forward. He reached for the sword but Xue Yang was faster — in a matter of seconds, the ropes binding him fell to his feet and he grasped Lan Jingyi by the collar, unsheathed the sword and held it to his neck.

“Hey, would you look at this,” said Xue Yang cheerfully as copious amounts of blood was spat on his dirty robes. “Even without my golden core, a blade is still a blade. And without a golden core, wounds will not heal.”

“Xue Yang, you dare?!?” Song Lan exclaimed furiously.

A large crowd had formed around them, now, and there were many enraged shouts echoed from mouth to mouth as the higher-ranking cultivators attempted to diffuse the situation.

“Song-Daozhang, what a surprise,” Xue Yang chuckled. “Didn’t I just watch you die again? That’s the second time now. What is it they say... Third time’s the charm?”

“Xue Yang, that disciple is innocent and has done nothing wrong,” said Xiao Xingchen coolly. “Let him go. What you are doing will only get you in trouble and make you more enemies.”

“Xiao Xingchen, how come we spent many years together, but you still don’t know the kind of person I am?” Xue Yang replied. “When have I been one to spare innocents? Besides, what benefit is there if I don’t end this child’s life right here?”

“*Unhand him!*” came a cold voice.

A pathway was made amongst the bystanders, and the temperature instantly seemed to drop by tens of degrees. Lan Wangji made his way through the crowd, Wei Wuxian in tow, and they looked down right *murderous*.

“Hey, it’s Hanguang-Jun! And the Yiling Patriarch!”

“Of course, since he’s one of the Lan Clan’s disciples, Hanguang-Jun would come. He really is noble.”

“Hanguang-Jun...” Lan Jingyi murmured, and he was very quiet as though he believed that if he was any louder, then the blade digging into his neck would cut deeper. “Senior Wei...”

"Aiya, Yiling Patriarch, I am quite disappointed," said Xue Yang, tutting. "You should have known this would happen when you left an impudent young child to watch me."

"Xue Yang, I spared you out of mercy. If any harm comes to that child, don't think you will be let off easy."

"Ah, so scary, Senior Yiling Patriarch," Xue Yang laughed. He pushed the blade deeper into Lan Jingyi's neck, as though testing the waters. "But... Oh dear, what should I do? He's bleeding."

"Xue Yang! You're really testing my patience , " said Wei Wuxian, raising his hand. A small amount of resentful energy started to gather at his fingertips, not quite as much as he would like, but it was enough to bring some harm to Xue Yang. Meanwhile, Lan Wangji had one hand on Bichen, and he was prepared to suffer the consequences for wielding his scarce spiritual energy.

"Okay, okay," said Xue Yang cheerfully, dropping the sword and raising both palms in the air. Lan Jingyi leapt forward and rushed to Lan Wangji, who immediately made sure he was protected behind them. "Well, only since it was *you* who asked me to, Yiling Patriarch. I, after all, am one of your most devout followers."

Just as everyone was starting to relax, Xue Yang suddenly whipped out something hidden inside his palm. It was a long guqin string, thin and sharp, which was clearly a result of the GusuLan Clan's chord assassination technique. He smirked, and leapt towards Lan Wangji, but just before he struck, his body froze like ice and he slumped to the floor. When he fell, all people saw was initially red. And then some dark hair, followed by the flow of a dress.

Wen Qing was standing behind Xue Yang's unconscious body, and she did not look impressed.

Chapter End Notes

Next Chapter: Empathy continued!

(I will try to update more swiftly this time, aha)

Empathy IV - The Present (32)

Chapter Summary

Empathy continues....

Chapter Notes

There's more plot to the story now lol, here you go

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Wen Qing was standing behind Xue Yang's unconscious body, and she did not look impressed. At once, the crowd erupted into a fit of murmurs and Wen Qing found a variety of eyes fixed on her intently.

“Who’s that?”

“Hey, she’s dressed in red, and do you see that motif?” replied another. “Looks like she’s a Wen. How arrogant of her, to waltz in front of the cultivation world like that!”

“What did she do to that delinquent Xue Yang?”

“No way! Did she kill him?!”

“How horrible!”

“Hey!” snapped Wen Qing loudly, silencing everyone at once. Her presence was frigid and aloft, and no one dared to speak from thereon. She looked up at Lan Wangji and stared at him, to his confusion.

“What are you doing?” she said, rushing forward and pushing him aside. “Hanguang-Jun, give me the boy! Have you forgotten we have no Golden Cores here?”

Understanding befell them all at once. Everyone immediately shuffled backwards and made a large radius around Wen Qing, who was gently laying Lan Jingyi on his side. She looked pensively at his face, and put her ear to his mouth. “Lan Jingyi? Don’t speak. Are you having any difficulty breathing? Blink once if no, twice if yes.”

Jingyi blinked once, and Wen Qing immediately rummaged through her supply bag, pulled out a cutting of cloth and applied it to the wound. With one of her hands busy holding it

down, she tried to grab something else within the bag but due to the awkward grip, she was unable to search for it properly.

“Will he,” said Wei Wuxian shakily. He swallowed thickly. “Will he be okay?”

“He’ll be fine, I have some emergency pills and creams that will work. Can you find them for me?” said Wen Qing, looking up at him. Wei Wuxian quickly dropped to his knees and followed her words. “The pill is in that small red pouch — yes, that one. Put it in his mouth. The cream is in that second packet, it’s green — here, smear it on the wound.”

Wei Wuxian’s hands shook so much as he applied it and he felt so dizzy. Everything had happened so quickly — Xue Yang, threatening those children — Jingyi, trying to stop him — and the long guqin string—

“The chord assassination technique. Either Jin Guangyao had taught him it, or they’re still scheming together even now,” said Lan Wangji. Wei Wuxian looked down at his hands, and they were covered in droplets of blood, but Lan Wangji was already wiping it off with his pale handkerchief. “The wound was not deep, Wei Ying. Jingyi is okay.”

“I should never have trusted Xue Yang with him,” said Wei Wuxian, putting his face in his hands. “What was I thinking? I must have been insane to—”

“Our judgement may have been clouded, but,” said Lan Wangji sternly, looking him in the eye. “It isn’t your fault. Everyone here, they are all too comfortable... Have you noticed? While discussing matters of death, they are unaffected; when faced with past events, they treat it like an amusing play; when looking at old enemies, they do not wish to fight, but rather...”

“It’s like we feel the need for them to join in,” said Wei Wuxian, horrified. “If we were all in our right minds, Xue Yang would have been incapacitated instantly. But all we did was leave him with a disciple, and tie him up in ropes that he could easily escape from.”

“Exactly,” said Nie Mingjue, coming to stand beside them. He nodded at Lan Wangji, and then turned to face Wei Wuxian. “Yiling— No, *Wei Wuxian*, it is to my understanding that... you were able to control some resentful energy?”

Feeling quite timid, Wei Wuxian slowly nodded.

“You said you believe this is the Burial Mounds,” said Nie Mingjue coolly. “Our Golden Cores have been sealed, and we are unable to fight with cultivation. You cannot wield Resentful Energy as greatly as before, but for some reason there are still remnants you were able to wield just moments ago — and the rest of us, as cultivators, are unable to sense it. Why do you think that is?”

“Well, I thought it must have just been leftovers, but—” Wei Wuxian replied, and then his face went dark at once. “I could ignore it before, and also excused it at the time, but... It’s all around us. Everywhere.”

Lan Wangji and Nie Mingjue's faces immediately snapped in his direction, and suddenly the room felt much smaller than before. They could practically imagine the cloud of gloom looming overhead, permeating the room with a dark cloak of shadows. "It's almost as though..."

"It's watching us, and influencing our minds," They looked at the screen then, large and pale, ready to introduce the next scene, and mutual understanding befell them at once.

"There's really no other way to get out?" said Nie Mingjue pensively. Nie Huaisang suddenly made a sound of intrigue, as though he wasn't too disappointed by the outcome of the situation. "I suppose to find out why we are here, we will have to watch to the end. Wei Wuxian, Hanguang-Jun, *if*, by any chance, when it finishes I cannot leave this place, then there's something I'd like to ask of you."

"Of course," said Lan Wangji and Wei Wuxian at once, but before Nie Mingjue could elaborate, Nie Huaisang was bawling into his arms.

"No, Da-ge, don't say that!" he sobbed. "You're leaving this place with me! If you think of saying something like that again, I'll break your legs!"

"Chifeng-Zun, I believe that you shouldn't pre-empt such an outcome," said a soft voice. Li Daiyu came forward and gently patted Nie Huaisang on the head. Her dark hair was swept over her shoulders and her blue eyes twinkled with good intentions. "Huaisang has had a hard enough time as-is. Please, for me, treat the time here as though you *will* leave."

Nie Mingjue looked at her for a few moments before he smiled, respect dancing in his eyes. "Huaisang, you have chosen well," he said simply, before returning to his seat.

"A-Yuan," called a voice softly, and the name was so unique that it caught Wei Wuxian's attention in an instant.

Wen Qing was looking at Lan Sizhui, who was staring at her in awe, and she was watching him intently as though seeing him for the first time.

"Q-Qing-Jie?" he murmured tentatively. Wei Wuxian knew that Sizhui had slowly been regaining his memories over the years, and he had instantly recognised Wen Qing. Wei Wuxian had been so preoccupied with everything that was happening that he hadn't properly introduced them. Sizhui probably had no idea she was here, and he hated himself fiercely at the thought.

"Qing-Jie, is that really you?" he continued, taking a tentative step towards her. Wen Qing gently patted Lan Jingyi on the shoulder, who was fiddling with the cloth around his neck, and closed the distance.

"You've grown up so well, A-Yuan," she said softly, putting his head on her shoulder. "I'm glad you made it out. I am so, so glad."

She looked up at Wei Wuxian and Lan Wangji, and sent them both a small, grateful smile. They nodded at her, and the brightness from the screen made both her and Sizhui fade into

the distance.

When she was sure the pair had left, A-Qing broke down into a fit of sobs. “Daozhang, please don’t blame me or that other Daozhang,” she cried, loudly sniffling. “That other Daozhang was tricked by that rotten man, he didn’t do this intentionally.”

She reached for his face with a delicate hand and respectfully closed his eyelids. “I’m going back now. I hope you’ll watch over me from up there in the heavens, and aid me in saving Xiao Xingchen-Daozhang,” she said, slowly dropping to her knees in a kowtow. “Please, let us escape that demon’s grasp, and give that lying monster Xue Yang what he deserves, and cut him in pieces so he is never able to reincarnate.”

Both Song Lan and Xiao Xingchen hung their heads and sat in silence for a few moments. They thought of all the lives lost in the Yueyang Chang clan, in Baixue Temple, and in Yi City, who Xue Yang had heartlessly killed without any reason. At first, it was simply disproportionate revenge, but soon Xue Yang had lost so much of his humanity that he received great joy in ending a life.

They thought of him, too, and the child that had lost its innocence that day, and was shown the harsh, unfortunate truth of the world far too early.

That same night, Xue Yang spent his evening carving small bunnies from apple slices, and he idly hummed a tune as he did so. When Xiao Xingchen noticed A-Qing at the doorway, he made a sound of acknowledgement. “A-Qing, you’re back late. Where’d you go off to play today?”

A-Qing’s eyes were red-rimmed and sore, and it was very clear that she had just been crying. Therefore, she replied with silence. Xue Yang noticed as such, and he looked up. “What happened? Her eyes are all puffy.”

Xiao Xingchen set down the plate of food and he looked at her worriedly. “What’s wrong?” he said, gently putting his hands on her shoulders. “Did someone bully you?”

“She’s always saying Xue Yang is bullying her, but does she cry?” said a middle-aged woman, sighing. “Aiyoh, it’s obviously something more than that.”

A-Qing was unable to hold in her tears, and she quickly burst into a fit of sobs, all the while conjuring a lie in improvisation. “Am I that ugly?” she sobbed, barrelling into his arms. “Am I ugly? Daozhang, please tell me, am I really that ugly?”

Xiao Xingchen immediately started to pat her head and comfort her. “Of course not. A-Qing is beautiful. Who said you were ugly?”

“She’s quite smart, to be able to conjure a lie so quickly,” said Ouyang Zizhen appreciatively. “And such a convenient one, at that.”

“Are you an idiot?” said Jin Ling incredulously. “It’s so obviously a lie. Who cries just because they were told they’re ugly? If all girls were *that* delicate, then the whole of Jinlin Tai would have a great river down the middle!”

“Hey, Clan Leader Jin, all due respect,” Yu Huizhong murmured. “But why, pray tell, are people in Jinlin Tai so cruel to maidens that their tears would... what did you say? Make a great river?”

Meanwhile, Li Daiyu was clearly gesturing to a certain Jin Zixun, who didn’t look very pleased at her pointing fingers at him.

Xue Yang scoffed at her. “You’re really ugly. Even uglier when you cry.”

“Don’t be like that,” Xiao Xingchen scolded.

“It’s not like you can see, Daozhang!” A-Qing cried. “He said I’m ugly, so I must really that ugly! Ugly and blind!”

“Ah, I didn’t think of that,” said Lan Jingyi softly, now that his throat was feeling a bit better. “So it’s true, then! People really tell others they’re beautiful, or they’re kind — whatever that person wants to hear!”

“You came back crying just because they said you’re ugly?” said Xue Yang, disturbed. “Where did your usual unreasonable rudeness go?”

“Aiya, look at them banter like that,” Luo Qingqing solemnly. “They look like siblings, when they aren’t at each other’s throats.”

Yu Huizhong nodded sadly. “To think of how happy their lives would have been, should Xue Yang have not been who he was.”

“ You’re rude!” A-Qing screamed furiously. Not even a moment later, the pitiful facade was back on her face when she looked at Xiao Xingchen. “Daozhang, do you have any money left?”

Xiao Xingchen made a thoughtful sound. “Hm... I think so.”

“I do,” Xue Yang quickly chimed in. “I can lend you some.”

“That’s so suspicious,” said Chu Rong, nodding alongside Wen Ruohan, who had been discussing many theories with her. “Why would Xue Yang give her money when she asks for it? Could it be that he really has started to feel some affection for the poor girl?”

“I want to go buy some pretty clothes and pretty jewellery. Can you come with me?” she sniffled.

“What is she doing?” said Jiang Cheng bewilderedly. “Shouldn’t she be telling Xiao Xingchen about what she saw? And she just wants money to buy some things?”

“Clan Leader Jiang, when a woman feels ugly, what do they want the most at that point in time?” said Lan Jingyi.

Jiang Wanyin looked at him as though he was purposely wasting his time. “I don’t know?” he said. “To improve their cultivation? That way, although people can look down on their appearance, they cannot belittle their skill in the sword.” When he finished, he looked so pleased with himself that Lan Jingyi couldn’t bring himself to correct him.

“They want to feel beautiful,” said Ouyang Zizhen. “Therefore, since someone called her ugly, she wants to make herself feel prettier by getting nice clothes.”

“But isn’t she supposed to be blind? How does that work?” said Jin Ling. “She wants to look more physically pleasing to herself, yet isn’t she pretending to be blind? She may as well be giving herself away!”

“This is why you have yet to wed, Jin Ling,” is all Ouyang Zizhen replied.

“I can, but it’s not as though I’d be able to help you see if they suit you or not,” said Xiao Xingchen.

“I can help her,” Xue Yang added, though his eyes were cold.

“Why does he look so angry?”

“Who knows. Do you think he’s caught on to A-Qing? Maybe he plans to go alone with her, and take the chance to kill her, once and for all!”

“Wait...” said Li Daiyu, slapping Nie Huaisang wildly on the arm. “I got it! Her feeling ugly is just a lie, right? Then not only does this outing *support* the lie, but it’s also a chance to get Xiao Xingchen alone and to expose Xue Yang! *That* must be why she wants to go!”

Nie Huaisang didn’t look very impressed — it was clear he had figured that out long ago — but nevertheless, he nodded along with Li Daiyu and praised her for her thinking.

**“I don’t care! I don’t care! I want you —I don’t want him at all!” A-Qing exclaimed.
“He’ll only call me ugly! And call me Little Blind!”**

“Alright,” Xiao Xingchen acquiesced. “How about tomorrow?”

“I wanna go tonight!”

**“If you go tonight, all the vendors will be closed,” said Xue Yang, folding his arms.
“Where could you get them?”**

“Fine! Tomorrow then!” A-Qing said, and she looked so nervous there was practically sweat dripping down her face. “It’s a promise!”

“She looks so terrified,” observed Xiao Xingchen quietly.

Song Lan thought the same, and looked down at A-Qing and slowly, gently patted her on the head. “You did good. Thank you.”

A blush rose to A-Qing’s face, but she preened under the rare contact Song Lan would usually instil.

“Let’s eat first.”

When they all sat up at the table, Xue Yang laughed at her and stuck his tongue out. A-Qing trembled, and quickly shovelled as much food as she could into her mouth.

“Well, I don’t think you look any better!” she yelled furiously, stabbing her chopsticks into the food. “You b—! You filthy maid! You loathsome little cockroach!”

“Young Maiden A-Qing is pretending to be so angered that she’s not in the mood to eat, but in reality she’s shaking in fear, huh?” said Nie Huaisang quietly. “This girl, she’s very, very brave.”

“Don’t waste food,” chided Xiao Xingchen. Xue Yang’s eyes drifted to him and then back to his food.

“It’s not for no reason that Xue Yang could imitate Xiao Xingchen so well,” Li Daiyu murmured solemnly. “After all, they sat in front of each other every single day. He had lots of time to figure it out. It’s just so unfortunate to think how close they must have been.”

“Go to bed soon,” said Xiao Xingchen, picking up their empty plates and bowls and leaving. “We’ll go to the market tomorrow.”

A-Qing quickly turned away when Xue Yang suddenly called out her name. She instantly froze in fear. “W— Why did you suddenly call my name like that?!”

“Ah, she’s like a sad little bird. This Xue Yang needs to be locked up when we leave, because if he manages to escape just to intimidate other sad children, then I will personally beat him up myself!”

Many nodded along with the statement, their eyes fixed like a binding charm to Xue Yang, who was lying nearby Nie Mingjue and Wen Qing, still unconscious.

“Weren’t you the one who said that you don’t want to be called Little Blind?” said Xue Yang off-handedly.

“People don’t just suddenly act nice to others unless they’re hiding other intentions!” A-Qing spat. “Just what do you want?!”

“Nothing, really. I just wanted to teach you what to do next time others curse at you.”

“Huh. Tell me, then. What should I do?”

“If someone calls you ugly, make her even uglier. Make a few cuts on her face so that she’ll never have the guts to go outside again,” said Xue Yang, and A-Qing froze up in fear. “If someone calls you blind, carve one end of your pole sharp and stab once in both of her eyes so that she’ll also be blind. See if she dares to bad mouth you again.”

“You’re scaring me again!”

“Well, think what you want,” said Xue Yang, holding out the plate of apple slices for her to take from. “Eat up.”

“What a madman! Seriously, how does he get away while saying stuff like that?!”

“Look at poor A-Qing, trembling like a leaf. I guess she realises that everything he says is the truth, now.”

“At least she has an excuse for that look on her face like she expects someone to perform *Lingchi* on her...”

“You know,” said Li Daiyu quietly. Nie Huaisang made a sound of inquisition. “He was so angry earlier... Did you see? That was probably after hearing that someone dared to call her ugly, other than him. And now this. I think... That this is Xue Yang caring for her, in his own twisted way.”

As Nie Huaisang nodded silently, A-Qing, who had heard everything, cried quietly into her arm.

The next day was very bright and sunny, and all three of them were outside, dressed and ready to go out. “If you two are gone, it means I have to buy today’s food again?” asked Xue Yang.

“Why can’t you buy it? Think of how many times Daozhang bought them!” said A-Qing disgruntledly. “You’re the only one who bullies and plays tricks on Daozhang all the time!”

“Okay, okay, I’ll go buy it. I’ll go right now,” said Xue Yang immediately.

As soon as she was sure he was sure he left, A-Qing nodded determinedly. ‘*He should be far away enough now.*’

“A-Qing, are you still not ready yet?” asked Xiao Xingchen. “Can we go now?”

Before he could continue, A-Qing grabbed his hand and dragged him back inside. She picked up the wooden plank and placed it over the door hinges, sealing the door securely.

The crowd erupted into a fit of both excited and nervous murmurs.

“This is it!”

“Looks like she is finally telling him!”

“I can’t wait for that delinquent to be pummelled into the dust for biting the hand that fed him!”

“What’s wrong?” said Xiao Xingchen.

“*Daozhang...*” A-Qing turned to him, and her eyes were blank; horror-struck as though she had witnessed something so twisted and inhumane, and it made Xiao Xingchen double-take in surprise. “Do you know someone named Xue Yang?”

Xiao Xingchen’s smile disappeared instantly. “Xue Yang?” he asked, quickly grabbing A-Qing by the shoulders. “A-Qing, how did you learn of this name?”

“Xue Yang is the person with us!” A-Qing cried. “He’s that rotten guy!”

“With us?” said Xiao Xingchen, trembling. “With us?”

‘*I can’t let Daozhang know that he killed living humans thinking that they were walking corpses,*’ A-Qing thought, ‘*I can’t let him know that he killed Song-Daozhang with his own hands either!*’

“I don’t see this going well,” said Wen Qing, crossing her arms with a sigh. “A man like Xiao Xingchen would not simply run away. This girl should have gotten a sect involved. They

would have been more inclined to help upon hearing it's Xue Yang."

"But his voice is different, and..."

"He disguised his own voice on purpose!" exclaimed A-Qing hysterically. "He was scared you'd recognise him! — Oh, right! Right, right! He has nine fingers!"

At once, Xiao Xingchen's knees buckled. A-Qing fortunately caught him before he could fall to the floor, and she gently assisted him to sit on a chair.

"How did you find out that he has nine fingers?" said Xiao Xingchen, soft as though he didn't want to believe what she was saying. "Have you touched his hand before? But if he really is Xue Yang, how could he have let you touch his hand and find out about his broken finger?"

A-Qing looked incredibly guilty, but she quickly replied, "Daozhang! Let me tell you the truth! I'm not blind — I can see! I didn't touch his hand. I saw it!"

Xiao Xingchen's head snapped up. "What did you say?! You can see?"

"I really feel so sorry for him!" said Ouyang Zizhen quickly. "First, he's told the person he's lived with and trusted for years is someone he is trying to kill... And now the girl he's also treated like a sister tells him she had lied to him the entire time."

"Imagine what he's thinking... The two people he trusted the most have been lying to him. He probably feels like there's no one on his side now, no one he can trust — after all, just recently, there was that falling out with Song Lan..."

"I'm sorry, Daozhang! I didn't lie to you on purpose! I was scared you wouldn't let me keep on following you after you knew that I wasn't blind!" said A-Qing. "Let's run away together. He'll be back after he finishes shopping for food! Daozhang—"

When A-Qing next saw Xiao Xingchen, however, it was to the bandage over his eyes bleeding into red! "Daozhang, you're bleeding!"

"Why would he be bleeding all of a sudden?"

"Maybe it's the shock?"

"Perhaps it means he's crying, but has no eyes to make tears."

"That's so sad! Where is Xiao-Daozhang, I really need to give him a hug!"

A-Qing quickly rummaged through the pouch attached to her sash and cleaned the area around his eyes.

“I’m fine... I’m fine, it’s only...” said Xiao Xingchen, taking her wrist. “An old injury. But if it’s really him, why didn’t he kill me from the start? And instead stay by my side for so many years? Why would he be Xue Yang?”

“Well that’s the question, isn’t it?” said Madam Jin. “We’re all wondering the same thing.”

“Of course, he wanted to kill you at first! But he was injured, he couldn’t move and needed someone to take care of him! Daozhang, we should hurry up and run, ah?”

Xiao Xingchen was silent for a few moments before he sighed. “A-Qing, you should go.”

“Go? Daozhang, we’re going together!”

“I can’t go,” said Xiao Xingchen, his tone not leaving any room for refusal. “I have to find out what he wants. He has to be after something. If I leave him here alone, all these people in Yi City will fall victim to his schemes. Xue Yang has always been like that.”

“A-Qing, he continued. “You can see and you’re a smart girl. I believe you can survive and give yourself a good life. You don’t understand how terrifying Xue Yang is as a person.”

‘I know! ’ A-Qing thought. ‘I know how scary he is!’

All of a sudden, there was a knock at the door. A-Qing rapidly paled. Xue Yang’s voice was muffled from the other side of it, “What’s going on in there? I’ve already come back, haven’t you guys left yet? If you haven’t, hurry up and remove the door latch and let me in. I’m exhausted.”

“It’s Xue Yang!”

“I knew they were taking too long! The girl should have just forced him to leave, if he really didn’t want to!”

A-Qing replied, “What’s wrong with this sister taking some time to change clothes? It’s not like it’s going to kill you!”

“How many clothes do you even have? No matter how many times you change it’s always the same. Open up, open up.”

“Psh!” A-Qing replied disgruntledly. “So what if I don’t open up?! Kick it open if you dare!”

“Haha, remember what you said,” Xue Yang murmured, smiling widely. “Daozhang, don’t blame me when you have to get the door fixed.”

He picked an apple out of his basket, took a big bite and kicked the door so fiercely it crashed to the floor. Xue Yang stepped inside, expecting to see A-Qing growling at him, but not a sword lodged in his stomach. His smile vanished.

“A-Qing!” exclaimed Xiao Xingchen. “Run!”

A-Qing immediately ran out of the house. ‘No, it’s too dangerous to leave Daozhang back there alone. I have to go back.’

She instead turned around and hid behind a pillar to watch the scene escalate.

“You think it’s fun?” Xiao Xingchen was saying.

“It is,” Xue Yang replied, and his voice was much deeper than before. “How isn’t it fun?”

‘So that’s his real voice!’

“How can someone conceal their true voice for such a long time?” said Jin Ling, scratching his head. “Did he make sure the wound didn’t heal or something?”

“When you’re a master of deception, A-Ling, things like creating facades, or even changing your voice, will come naturally to you,” Jin Zixuan replied and he placed a hand on his son’s head and started softly patting it. “Not every person you meet will have good intentions, but more than not trusting people, I want you to leave this place while *trying* to find the good in people, instead of the bad, ah?”

“Okay, A-Die,” Jin Ling murmured, his eyes unconsciously drifting to where Wei Wuxian was sitting.

‘I really treated Mo Xuanyu badly... I was even horrible about his attraction to men... I swear I would say sorry to him many, many times — after all, he still is my Uncle — but it’s too late now.’

“What was your goal in staying with me all these years?” asked Xiao Xingchen.

Xue Yang chuckled. “Who knows? Perhaps I was bored?”

“Only Xue Yang would find this situation amusing,” said Jiang Cheng, and he did not look impressed. Lan Xichen looked down at his hand, where he was idly fiddling with the ring of Zidian.

The answer was evidently not good enough, for Xiao Xingchen wrenched the sword out of Xue Yang’s stomach, leaving a long trail of thick blood in the wake.

"I've never seen Xiao Xingchen so furious," said Luo Qingqing, making a sound of surprise. "Someone like Xue Yang must really infuriate him."

Chu Rong, who was standing next to her, quickly nodded. "And he doesn't even know the worst of it... I just hope he takes it well — evidently," she glanced at Xiao Xingchen across the room. "This story will not have a happy ending, but I really hope it happens without any suffering."

"Xiao Xingchen," said Xue Yang coldly. "You probably don't want to hear the latter half of that unfinished story, do you?"

"I don't."

"But I'm going to tell you anyway. After that, if you still think I'm in the wrong, then you can do with me as you like."

"Here we go again," said one of the disgruntled Lans. "He really doesn't take no for an answer, does he? I heard Jingyi-Shixiong say the same thing last time — '*I don't*' — and he still told it anyway!"

The child saw the guy who had tricked him into delivering the letter again. He felt wronged, but also so happy, and ran up to the other, crying, telling him — "I delivered the letter but I didn't get any treats and got beaten up! Can you give me another plate?"

Xue Yang was clinging onto the man's robes, and he quickly kicked the child off like he was a pest. "Can't you see I also got beaten?! F— off!"

"Who would use such language on a child?" exclaimed Jiang Yanli, putting a hand to her mouth. She could only imagine her A-Ling in that situation, cold, hungry, and helpless, and her heart ached for the poor boy scrambling on the floor.

She closed her eyes and reflected deeply. If A-Cheng hadn't been the one to raise her son, who knows what would have happened to him? He could have turned out like that delinquent — cold and heartless — and so she felt more regret in her heart when she recalled her furious attitude towards him at the beginning.

He had done so much for both her and A-Xian, and he was probably already beating himself up for what he did. Did she really have to lecture him like that, as though he was still a child — her young, sweet A-Cheng who she would have to scold whenever he did something wrong?

The man swiftly turned around and motioned for the servant to leave. Xue Yang was beaten and bruised, laying still on the floor, the remains of hope in his eyes completely vanishing. "You promised me..."

Determination in his eyes, he got back up and launched his body in front of the cart. “You promised me you’d give me treats!”

“Hey! Kid, this man’s clearly not planning to give you anything!” Li Daiyu exclaimed. “Go, go! Get out of the way!”

The man lifted up the curtain and snatched the horse whip off the servant. He hit Xue Yang squarely in the face, and sent him to the floor with a loud thud. Then, he started the cart once more, and the horses came clattering forward.

“Ignore him,” the man said, coldly watching with indifference as the wheels ran over the child’s hand with a sickening *crunch*, and one of the fingers detached itself and flew into the middle of the pathway.

“AHHHHHHHHHHH!”

“That’s horrible… No child deserves that, no matter who they turn out to be in the future.”

“I think he should have been made to join a Sect and reformed into an upstanding young man!” said Old Liu, sounding very certain in his words.

“Hey! There’s no redemption for his actions!” refuted Old Chang furiously. “What are you saying, you old fool?! Do *you* need to be sent to Cloud Recess to be ‘reformed’ into someone with even a *slither* of wits?! You shut up!”

“*You* shut up!”

“And this man was Chang Pin’s father,” said Xue Yang, showing Xiao Xingchen his four-fingered hand. “Seven years old! All the bones in the left hand shattered, and a finger gone just like that! Xiao Xingchen, when you captured me and brought me to Koi Tower, so serious, so righteous, you questioned why I would wipe out an entire sect because of a little suspicion. Just because the finger isn’t yours, you can’t feel the pain?!”

“It’s not that he can’t feel the pain,” said Luo Qingqing, pressing the space between her eyebrows irritatedly. “It’s that your so-called ‘justice’ was not at all proportional! Someone cuts off your finger, you cut off theirs — fair enough, an eye for an eye — but if they, I don’t know, cut off your arm, would you go and massacre the entire city?! It’s delusion, I tell you! He’s absolutely mental!”

“...” Everyone looked at one another, shrugging helplessly. *Who said he isn’t?*

“And Why did I massacre his entire sect?” Xue Yang continued. “Why don’t you ask him why he’d come and trick and torment me for his own entertainment?! You can thank the Chang Clan for the Xue Yang you see today! The YueyangChang Clan merely got what it deserved!”

“If you wanted to take revenge on the Chang Clan for your finger, then take one of his fingers!” exclaimed Xiao Xingchen furiously. “Why did you have to kill all those innocents?”

Xue Yang’s eyes were cold. “It was only fifty-something people. How could they make up for even a single one of my fingers?”

“Only fifty, he says?! That’s an entire clan, too!”

“Well, if you compare it to Wei Wuxian’s 3000...”

“*Shut up!*” said half the crowd at once.

Xiao Xingchen was so shocked that he put a hand to his face and double-took. “Xue Yang, you truly are... Absolutely *disgusting*!”

Xue Yang’s eyes were red-rimmed, and he looked as though Xiao Xingchen had just deeply betrayed him. “Xiao Xingchen, I hate people like you the most. You all act so lofty, so righteous and think yourselves saints. You find me disgusting? Fine, you think I’d care? But, do you really have the *right* to find me disgusting?”

“What do you mean by that?” Xiao Xingchen bit out.

“He’s going to tell him,” said Li Daiyu, covering Nie Huaisang’s eyes. “I can’t watch this.”

“Why are you covering *my* eyes, then?” said Nie Huaisang bewilderedly. “Just close your own!”

“We haven’t gone out at night to kill walking corpses recently, have we?” said Xue Yang, his eyes crazed. “But, two years ago, we went out every few days to kill a whole bunch of them, no? And the family, from the young to the old, all kneeling down in front of you, hitting their heads against the ground and crying in an effort to gain your mercy. It’s too bad you’re blind now, so you couldn’t see the terror and pain on their faces when you pierced through their hearts.”

“If I hadn’t cut out their tongues, they would definitely be begging, ‘*Daozhang, please spare us!*’ or something like that.”

“You tricked me...” Xiao Xingchen sobbed. The blood dripping down from his bandaged eyes trickled down his face in place of a tear.

“That’s right, I tricked you,” said Xue Yang. “I always have been. Who would’ve thought you would believe all my lies, yet not believe me when I decide to tell the truth?”

“Maybe it’s because *your* truth is so, so , much more twisted than any lie you could conjure,” said Li Daiyu. “Maybe it’s because we want to believe in the *better* of the two things.”

Xiao Xingchen was so blind in his rage that his knees staggered. He leapt forward with his sword and attempted to strike Xue Yang once more. “SHUT UP! SHUT UP!!”

“Alright, I’ll shut up!” said Xue Yang, smiling. He snapped his fingers twice. “If you won’t believe me, how about sparring with the one behind you? Let him tell you if I’m still lying to you or not!”

“Hey, didn’t Xue Yang say if Xiao Xingchen didn’t think he deserved redemption, then he could do what he wanted to him?” said Yu Huizhong distrungledly. “What a bite-no-bark person! Well guess what, Xue Yang, *I hate people like you!*”

There was a blur of colour, in which a figure struck forward to attack Xiao Xingchen. A pause. And then Xiao Xingchen’s lips trembled. “Are you... Zichen ?”

Chapter End Notes

Next Chapter: The end of Empathy! Then we work towards the end of Yi City arc!

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